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Palacios OKs admin leave in the spirit of holiday season. **PAGE 4**

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\$1

Hafa Adai!

Merry Christmas!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

DPS fires 12 officers accused of illegal OT

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety shared that it has officially terminated the 12 remaining officers who were under investigation for incurring illegal overtime.



KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
Department of Public Safety
Commissioner Clement Bermudes speaks at a press conference yesterday.

In a press conference yesterday, DPS Commissioner Clement Bermudes announced that as of last month, DPS has terminated the 12 remaining officers of the initial 28 who were under investigation over illegal overtime.

"From the 28, as it further developed, some were reinstated, some resigned, and that

See DPS on Page 4



MERRY MAN'AMKO

Carolers from the Saipan Man Amko' Center recently visited the Office of the Governor, where they sang Christmas carols to spread joy and holiday spirit. Audience members included Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, DLNR Secretary Sylvan Igisomar, OMB special assistant Virginia Villagomez, and staff members from the Office of the Governor, the Attorney General's Office, and the Office of Management and Budget. The carolers were accompanied by Walter Manglona, director for the Office of Aging

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Magofna seeks regulation of lime for betelnut

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Underscoring the need to

protect the people until concrete studies are conducted pertaining to the use of *afok* or *bweesch* (lime) in betelnut

chewing, and its link to oral cancer, Sen. Corina L. Magofna (Ind-Saipan) has introduced a

See MAGOFNA on Page 4

CNMI to seek alternative funding sources for fishery dev't



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CNMI head of delegation Sylvan Igisomar during the meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission in Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

RAROTONGA, Cook Islands—The annual meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission meeting last week in the Cook Islands was deemed a success as there was a consensus on a revised tropical tuna Conservation and Management

See FUNDING on Page 4

Hofschneider wants cannabis industry to also flourish on Tinian, Rota

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) said cannabis is a CNMI industry so they want it

See CANNABIS on Page 4

CHRISTMAS DAY NOTICE

Saipan Tribune will have no issue on Monday, Dec. 25, 2023. Publication will resume on Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2023.

INSIDE



SUPPLEMENT

Saipan Tribune is honored to help Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. celebrate its 50th anniversary with a pullout supplement.

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SUPPLEMENT

Saipan Tribune rewards the islands' aspiring artists with what they wish for this Christmas.

PAGE 15



BUSINESS

Jody O'Sullivan debuts as the new pastry chef at Hyatt Regency Saipan by making his first Christmas cake offering on Saipan.

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GOT A NEWS TIP?

TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com



Local

Guam judge to hear 'he said, she said' sexual assault case

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Supreme Court has appointed Guam Judge Elyze M. Iriarte to hear the "he said, she said" sexual assault case between two Superior Court employees who have filed similar complaints against one another.

Following an order from the Supreme Court requiring Superior Court Associate Judge

Joseph Camacho to recuse himself from the rape case of William Abraczinkas, all sitting Superior Court judges have officially recused themselves from the suit.

Because there is no sitting CNMI judge to hear Abraczinkas' case, Chief Justice Alexandro Castro has appointed Guam Judge Elyze M. Iriarte as judge pro tempore in Abraczinkas' upcoming trial.

Last week, Supreme Court

Justices John A. Manglona and Perry B. Inos ruled in favor of Abraczinkas, a former Superior Court law clerk, granting his petition for a writ of mandamus and prohibition that essentially disqualifies all Superior Court judges from handling his case and ordering the appointment of a judge pro tempore instead.

Specifically, by issuing this writ of mandamus, the Supreme Court ordered Cama-

cho's recusal from this case.

The high court order explained that even though a motion to disqualify all five judges is overbroad, Camacho, at least, must recuse himself due to the appearance of impropriety that comes from a judge of the Superior Court presiding over a case involving two Superior Court employees.

"This opinion vacates the lower court's denial of a motion to disqualify all judges of

the Superior Court. [Camacho] must recuse himself from presiding over a case involving two employees of the Superior Court," said the order.

Abraczinkas is being accused of sexually assaulting his co-worker, but he claims he was the one who was sexually assaulted and that he had filed a complaint with the CNMI Judiciary's Human Resources prior to the rape complaint being filed against him.

According to the Supreme Court order, the Superior Court

committed clear error by failing to grant the petitioner's motion for disqualification.

Abraczinkas had argued that all Superior Court judges should recuse themselves because the case involves two court employees.

Abraczinkas argued that the Commonwealth Code requires that a judge recuses when a reasonable person would find that the judge's continued presence over the case would create the appearance of impropriety.



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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL



RFP NO.: DPW24-RFP No.: 42400019

SUBMISSION DATE: January 16, 2024

TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Topographic and As-Built Survey of Natibu Recreational Sports Facilities, Precinct IV, Saipan"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

The project package will be available on or after **December 15, 2023** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan.

There will be a **Pre-Proposal Conference** for this project on **January 04, 2024**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the Department of Public Works Conference Room 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center Office, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **January 11, 2024** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ RAY N. YUMUL
Secretary, DPW

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
Acting Director, Division of
Procurement Services

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Job Title: Computer Specialist

Hours: Full-Time

Company: Sun & Surf dba National Office Supply

Location: 3160 Beach Road, I Liyang Saipan, MP 96950

Job Summary: The Computer Specialist performs duties and responsibilities involving installing and repairing computer hardware and software; meeting with clients to identify their needs, examine and troubleshoot equipment, perform upgrades, and discuss the extent of repairs or replacements to clients. Education: Bachelor of Science degree from an accredited college or university in computer science.

Required Qualifications: Experience: 24 months of work experience as Computer Specialist. Knowledge: circuit boards, processors, chips, electronic equipment, computer hardware and software, including applications and programming, digital copiers, multi-functional printers, time recorders, printers.

To Apply: This job opportunity is for a full-time position. Only US-workers will be considered. All interested US applicants must submit a resume and employment certification showing the required work experience via e-mail at nos.saipan.hr@g-mail.com. Applicants may also submit their documents personally at the Admin Office of Sun & Surf Limited dba National Office Supply, 3160 Beach Road, I Liyang Saipan, MP 96950. They may also call (670) 234-3197 for directions.

RNV: We wholeheartedly deny the allegations

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

RNV Construction and affiliated companies, who are being sued by former employees over allegation that their rights under the Fair Labor Standards Act were violated, are denying the allegations against them.

Recently, a lawsuit was filed against RNV Construction and its affiliates Best Deal Merchandise, Coreplus Construction, and Ruel Villacrusis over allegations that their employees were not being paid according to U.S. prevailing wage determinations and overtime wages.

The lawsuit was filed by former employees of the defendants: Prospero A. Armia, Nemencio Q. Deleon, Giovan Malazarte, Ian R. Alcosoba, Ranie E. Celestial, Rudy B. Naraja, and Victor P. Friginal.

In a statement from RNV construction's general manager Villacrusis, RNV denies the allegations and claims they are false.

"RNV Construction and its affiliates wholeheartedly deny the allegations made by a few of its former employees that it violated the Fair Labor Standard Act. We are always careful to pay the correct wage and comply with the law, what is alleged in the complaint is not true," said Villacrusis.

Villacrusis claims that since RNV's inception in 1998, RNV has been paying all overtime work at the rate of time and a half of the regular rate.

"RNV does not delay payment of wages and never has. RNV has even been paying more than the minimum wage for many of its employees and provides benefits to all employees," he said.

Furthermore, Villacrusis claims that the allegations come at a time when these employees are required to leave the United States pursuant to immigration laws.

"The timing of the filing of the complaint is suspect. Five of the employees in-

volved were affected by the 'touchback' rule of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, and two others were issued a Notice of Intent to Revoke by USCIS. The company provided them with tickets back to the Philippines. Six of the seven are believed to have remained on Saipan," he said.

In a statement from RNV's lawyer Michael Dotts, he said RNV intends to vigorously defend its case.

"RNV Construction is committed to its core values of treating each employee

with respect and dignity and complying with all laws. RNV intends to vigorously defend the case, said Dotts.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, the plaintiffs, who were employed by the companies in question at some point dating back to 2019, allege in their suit that their employers failed to pay them the prevailing wage and overtime wages.

The plaintiffs, who are demanding a jury trial, wants payment for applicable overtime compensation for all hours worked in an amount

to be determined at trial.

The plaintiffs also want the court to order the companies to pay them their overtime compensation for all hours worked beyond 40 hours in each work week in an amount to be determined at trial; order payment of all unpaid services, tasks, and work done for defendants; and order the defendants to pay liquidated damages, plus prejudgment interest, and attorney's fees and costs.

Lastly, the plaintiffs want the imposition of sanctions and penalties against all the

defendants to deter future violations.

The first cause of action in this case was alleged failure to pay overtime wages in violation of the FLSA.

According to the lawsuit, the defendants claimed they were never paid overtime wages and claimed their employers "illegally deducted" money from their pay.

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is a manpower agency in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands. EFG PACIFIC HOLDINGS, LLC is currently seeking 2 Accountants to join our office located at Room 104, Marianas Business Plaza, Nauru Loop, Susupe, Saipan, MP, 96950.

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Palacios OKs admin leave in the spirit of holiday season

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios is authorizing non-essential em-

ployees of the government's executive branch to take administrative leave this Tuesday, Dec. 26, in the spirit of the holiday season.

In a memorandum addressed to all department and agency heads yesterday, Palacios said with the holiday season approaching, he would like to take

a moment to express his heartfelt appreciation for all the hard work, dedication, and sacrifice throughout this year. "Your continued commit-

ment, support, and contributions to the Commonwealth have been instrumental in overcoming the obstacles we face," the governor said. Palacios said he and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, along with their families, wish all the exec-

utive branch personnel and their families a "joyous holiday season and prosperous New Year." "May this coming year be filled with health, happiness and abundant opportunities for the Commonwealth. Stay safe CNMI," the governor said.

USCIS updates policy guidance for international students

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is issuing policy guidance regarding the F and M student nonimmigrant classifications, including the agency's role in adjudicating applications for employment authorization, change of status, extension of stay, and reinstatement of status for these

students and their dependents in the United States. This guidance consolidates existing policy. USCIS expects that this will provide welcome clarity to international students and U.S. educational institutions on a wealth of topics, including eligibility requirements, school transfers,

practical training, and on- and off-campus employment. For example, the guidance clarifies that F and M students must have a foreign residence that they do not intend to abandon, but that such students

may be the beneficiary of a permanent labor certification application or immigrant visa petition and may still be able to demonstrate their intention to depart after a temporary period of stay. In addition, the guidance specifies how F students

seeking an extension of optional practical training based on their degree in a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics field may be employed by startup companies, as long as the employer adheres to the training plan requirements, remains in good standing with

E-Verify, and provides compensation commensurate to that provided to similarly situated U.S. workers, among other requirements. (USCIS)

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

FUNDING

From page 1


Measure for 2024 through 2026. Covering almost 60% of the world's tuna supply, this measure establishes global regulations governing the fishing of bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin tuna. The WCPFC increased the U.S. Hawaii-based longline fishery bigeye tuna annual catch limit from 3,554 to 6,554 metric tons after considering the healthy stock status.

"Although this is a win for the Hawaii longline fishery, it is a loss in fishery development funding opportunities for the Pacific Territories" said CNMI head of delegation Sylvan Igisomar. The United States was unsuccessful in preserving a provision in the tropical tuna CMM allowing for the transfer of catch portions to the Hawaii longline fishery in exchange for funds under specified fishing agreements. These agreements and funding have supported critical fishery development initiatives in the

CNMI since 2010. American Samoa and CNMI leadership expressed frustration that plans were not in place to make up for lost fishery development funding before the possible removal of this provision. The specified fishing agreements have funded initiatives from the CNMI Marine Conservation Plan like the Garaman Fishing Base shoreline revetment project, efforts to improve fishery data collections for stock assessments, and bottomfish workshops and training for the fishing com-

munity to name a few. The Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates that the MCP comprise conservation and management objectives such as marine and fisheries research, and conservation, education and enforcement activities related to marine and coastal management. The MCP must also be consistent with the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council's Fishery Ecosystem Plans.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com



NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, through its Chairperson of the Board, is hereby giving notice that a Regular Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 28, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. at the NMHC Conference Room, Saipan. The public is welcome to submit written or oral comments regarding the agenda below. Individuals interested in attending the meeting and needing special accommodations are requested to contact NMHC in advance.

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

- a. Call to Order
- b. Roll Call
- c. Adoption of Agenda
- d. Adoption of Minutes: September 22, 2023 Meeting Minutes

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

III. CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- a. Admin/Procurement & Accounting (NMHC/CDBG-DR)
- b. Mortgage Credit
- c. Program and Housing
- d. Asset Management
- e. FY2021 & FY2022 Audit for NMHC & CDBG-DR
- f. CDBG-DR

IV. DEPUTY CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- a. CDBG
- b. Homeowner Assistance Fund
- c. NMHC Divisions Revenue Generation -vs- Expense for FY2022 and FY2023

V. OLD BUSINESS

- a. NMHC Employee Handbook
- b. Division SOPs
- c. Travel Reports from January 2023 to November 2023 Certification of Completion
- d. Tier 1 Environmental Report from DR Safety Consultant, LLC

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Board Resolution Authorizing the Vice-Chairman to Sign the General Depository Agreement
- b. Return and Reallocation of Credits for Palm Breeze Homes, LLC
- c. Return and Reallocation of Credits for Lotus Homes, LLC
- d. Return and Reallocation of Credits for Ladera Homes, LLC
- e. Selection of LIHTC Applicants for 2023 Credits

VII. LEGAL COUNSEL'S PENDING/ONGOING REPORT

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- a. Personnel

IX. OTHER MATTERS

X. ADJOURNMENT

(Notes: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13 (a)(7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.)

/s/
Merced (Marcie) M. Tomokane
Chairperson of the Board

DPS

From page 1

left the department with 12 officers under investigation. Unfortunately, we lost the remaining 12 this past month, we terminated them from the Department because the allegations against them were substantiated," he said. Bermudes shared that after further investigation into the 12 officers, DPS alleges that it was proven that these officers managed to accrue ille-

gal overtime hours by manually writing in their hours instead of clocking in using biometrics. "There were past practices that allowed that OT and those practices were unofficial time keeping which is illegal. The department has only one official timekeeper and that's here at the administration division because everyone must come here to clock in through biometrics. Surprisingly, most of them didn't use biometrics and instead incurred overtime through manual write-ins," he said. Bermudes said he has also addressed this practice and has made it a requirement for all officers to clock in through biometrics and if they missed their time to clock in, officers are now required to write directly to the commissioner explaining how this happened. "One of the new policies I have instituted to address that is by requiring everybody to use the biometrics and anybody who does not must write me a letter justifying why they failed to clock in through bio-

metrics," he said. Meanwhile, as of earlier this month, nine of the 12 terminated officers have appealed their termination with the Civil Service Commission. Commenting on the recently filed appeals, Bermudes said these officers have the right to do so as former government employees. DPS, for its part, will be preparing its response.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

MAGOFNA

From page 1

bill that will regulate such substance under the Pure Food and Drug Control Act. Magofna stated in Senate Bill No. 23-54 that she formally introduced during a Senate session Tuesday that the purpose of this legislation is to protect consumers by establishing specific guidelines on the manufacturing, distribution, and sale of *afok* or

bweesch under the Pure Food and Drug Control Act. She said the other purpose is to continue to safeguard CNMI's natural resources. The senator noted that in the past, *afok* or *bweesch* was made from coral obtained from the reefs in the CNMI coastal waters, but the enactment of Public Law 3-47 established the regulation and protection of all coastal resources including corals. She said the Division of Coastal Resources Manage-

ment manages the ecologically significant resource areas for their contribution to marine productivity and value as wildlife habitats, and preserves the functions and integrity of reefs as it relates to the CNMI's sustainable and conservation efforts, among other things. Magofna said as a result, the harvesting of corals to manufacture and produce *afok* or *bweesch* for consumption, both for personal and commercial use, was eventually restricted and regulated.

She said the ingredients used in *afok* or *bweesch* for chewing betel nut have changed over time, thus it is more prone to dangerous adulterated or manipulated ingredients by actors in search of financial gain. Magofna recognized that the prevalence of oral cancer in the CNMI community has alarmingly and significantly increased in the last few years.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

CANNABIS

From page 1

to also flourish on Tinian and Rota. Hofschneider stated during a Senate session on Tuesday that they want the cannabis industry to grow, but at the same time also allow the potential operators and producers on Rota and Tinian to be part of the CNMI Cannabis Commission.

He commended the commission for coming up with their Citizen-Centric Report for Fiscal Year 2023 and for reportedly actually generating at least \$1.8 million of revenue for the CNMI in Fiscal Year 2022. Asked for the veracity of \$1.8 million in revenue, Finance Secretary Tracy B. Norita told *Saipan Tribune* Wednesday that she will need to verify this statement. Hofschneider said it is their

vision and hope that this industry is going to supplement the CNMI economy as well. "And I think we have an opportunity is just that there are some elements that we need to, you know, we need guidance on as members of the legislature," said the senator. He did not elaborate. CNMI Cannabis Commission managing director Mikiotti Evangelista told the House of Representatives Cannabis Committee on Tuesday that the

cannabis industry is growing. Evangelista said at present, a total of 16 commercial cannabis licenses have already been issued in the CNMI: eight marijuana producers, six marijuana retailers, one marijuana processor, and one marijuana lounge licensee. Evangelista said they also have nine pending applicants—three marijuana producers, two marijuana processors, and four marijuana retailers.

DPS sets sobriety checkpoints tomorrow

The CNMI Department of Public Safety would like to announce that they will conduct several sobriety checkpoints tomorrow, Dec. 23, 2023.

The times and places are as follow:

■ 6pm-7:15pm along Chalan Monsignor Martinez by CNMI NAP office in As Lito.

■ 6pm-7:15pm along Chalan Monsignor Guerrero by Joeten Building in Dandan.

■ 9pm-10:15pm along Chalan Pale Arnold by Twins Supermarket in Lower Navy Hill.

■ 9pm-10:15pm along Beach Road by the Garapan Fishing Base. The purpose of these scheduled checkpoints is to promote public safety while increasing awareness of the dangers of driving while under the influence of

drugs, alcohol, or medications while on the island's roadways. Locations of these checkpoints were pre-determined based on the number of auto accidents and impaired driving violations in the area. **(DPS)**

CUC offices, Customer Service closed on Dec. 25

In observance of Christmas Day, Commonwealth Utilities Corp. offices and Customer Service centers will be closed on Monday, Dec. 25, 2023

For more information, contact the CUC hotline at (670)

236-4333 or visit its website at www.cucgov.org and monitor its Facebook page for the latest updates.

For questions or concerns, contact Customer Service at (670) 664-4282. **(CUC)**

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PUBLIC NOTICE

(This Notice is paid by NMHC with HUD Funds)

December 13, 2023

Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang, and the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, through its Chairwoman, Ms. Merced "Marcie" M. Tomokane, wish to announce that its Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER) for Program Year 2023 is available for review. Comments made by the general public should be submitted no later than 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 28, 2023. Written comments must be submitted to the NMHC Office in Garapan, Saipan, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950, or by contacting Ms. Zenie P. Mafnas, Deputy Corporate Director, at 234-6866/9447.

The report will be submitted to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Honolulu Office, on or before December 29, 2023. The CAPER encompasses the performance assessment of all HUD-funded programs, administered by the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands.

The report is available on NMHC's website at www.nmhc.gov.net and at the NMHC Central Office in Saipan and at the respective NMHC Field Offices in Rota and Tinian during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays. Individuals needing special accommodations to review and comment on the plan must contact the Planning Division for arrangements by calling (670) 234-6866/9447 during regular business hours.

/s/

Merced "Marcie" M. Tomokane

Chairwoman of the Board



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Tinian Veterans Memorial Park illuminated for the holidays

TINIAN—The Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan held its annual Christmas Lighting Event last Dec. 7 at the Tinian Veterans Memorial Park.

Community members gath-

ered at the park in anticipation to witness the spectacular Christmas lights assembly put together by the Tinian Mayor's Office Special Projects Division. A countdown

was conducted for Mayor Edwin P. Aldan and the Tinian leadership to flip the switch, as the Tinian community stood by to welcome this year's holiday season. Later

in the evening, a performance was given by the Tinian Elementary School Chamorro Club students.

The Tinian Veterans Memorial Park was transformed




CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Tinian Veterans Memorial Park was transformed into an island winter wonderland during the annual Christmas Lighting Event last Dec. 7.

into an island winter wonderland where community members and visitors gather every night to enjoy the wonderful displays. According to Aldan, "the highlight of this year's Christmas lighting event is the awe-inspiring latte stone Christmas display. The latte stones, symbolic pillars of the Chamorro culture, are stone pillars topped with a capstone, traditionally used as the foundation of ancient Chamorro houses. The impressive display pays homage

to the CNMI's history while igniting a sense of wonder and admiration among locals and visitors alike."

The Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan, together with Aldan and the Tinian leadership, would like to wish everyone in the Marianas a safe and enjoyable holiday season. They encourage visitors and guests who visit the island to stop by the Veterans Memorial Park to witness the spectacular Christmas light displays. (PR)



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JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 02-2024

Opening date: November 24, 2023 Closing date: December 22, 2023

<p>Location: SAIPAN Position(s): (1) Saipan Airport Manager (1) Comptroller</p>	<p>SALARY \$70,000 (UNGRADED) \$80,000 (UNGRADED)</p>
<p>Location: ROTA Position(s): (1) Rota Ports Manager</p>	<p>SALARY \$55,000 (UNGRADED)</p>

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 111-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the **CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or CPA Administration Office, Tinian International Airport, or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport.** Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office (Saipan) or at the Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport is no later than **5:00P.M. on Friday, December 22, 2023.**

Detailed information on qualifications and position descriptions for the above positions may be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., except on holidays, at the CPA Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal or CPA Admin. Office at the Tinian International Airport or at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.robert@cnmiports.com and hspcialist@cnmiports.com or by phone at (670)237-6500.

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**Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport
"Car Rental Concession"**

**Request for Proposals
for: CPA-RFP-001-24
CPA Concession No. CRS-2023-01**

The Commonwealth Ports Authority ("CPA" or "Authority") is soliciting proposals for the award of one (1) concession granting the privilege to provide motor vehicle rental services to the traveling public (including the provision of insurance related to motor vehicles rented in the operation of such motor vehicle rental services) at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport ("Car Rental Concession"). The successful proposer will be expected to provide motor vehicle rental services in accordance with its concession and concession agreement at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport for a period of two years with an option upon entering into a concession agreement with the Authority.

The date of issuance of CPA-Concession No. CRS-2023-01 is **December 6, 2023**, and it can be obtained at the issuing office: CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950, Second floor of Arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport.

Proposals must be addressed to Commonwealth Ports Authority, Attn: Car Rental Concessions Evaluation Committee, CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950; and submitted to and received by the CPA Administration Office (second floor of arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport) **by or before 4:00 p.m. on January 9, 2024**, at which time the proposal period shall expire. Proposals must be accompanied with a non-refundable administrative fee of \$100.00. Payment shall be made in cash, credit card, or cashier's check payable to the Commonwealth Ports Authority to defray the costs associated with handling and considering the proposal. Proposals are not required to include a prepaid minimum concession fee.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to cancel this RFP and to reject any and all proposals in accordance with its Concession Regulations (NMIAC Chapter 40-70).

/s/
LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director



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Making good on a vow to make the CNMI 'Rest Assured'



Pacifica Underwriters Insurance Inc. president and CEO Shirley Ann T. Sablan. PIUI



Pacifica Underwriters Insurance Inc. board chairman Norman T. Tenorio. PIUI



Pacifica Underwriters Insurance Inc. operations manager Jessica D. Sablan. PIUI

By JON PEREZ
CORRESPONDENT

Pacifica Underwriters Insurance Inc. is one of the CNMI businesses that has witnessed how the islands transitioned from under the Trust Territory government to being a U.S. commonwealth. It has seen the transformation of the CNMI economy and political landscape, and how it has weathered every challenge the islands faced in five decades.

Like most local businesses and companies that started in the CNMI, Pacifica Insurance keeps track of local and global issues that can affect the insurance industry. Company president and CEO Shirley Sablan said foresight and preparation are key factors to their survival, which is why they keep abreast of global issues that might affect their industry.

"One thing is for sure: However tough it gets, we will need insur-

ance for those uncertainties, regardless of the economic situation. The business of insurance isn't necessarily recession-proof, especially if it is mismanaged, but because we all want peace of mind, the product itself is usually placed high up on our list of priorities, making it a bare necessity," said Sablan. "And if we didn't have all the pieces together, Pacifica would not have gotten this far. These pieces were the right choices we made in our product offerings, partnerships made and kept, recruitment and professional development, financial and operational management. We may not have always done things seamlessly, but we learn and adjust to do it better the next time around."

She believes a company should make sure to work around the ever-changing economic, political, and social landscape that might happen anytime, driven by world events.

"We do not get to choose exactly how things should be because

there are many moving parts. The best that we can do is work well with others, have an open mind, listen intently, adjust accordingly, and adapt. Having said this, we adapt to change as necessary and cater to consumer needs and demands to ensure our services and products make sense," she said.

Having a somewhat personal touch in dealing with their clients' needs has allowed Pacifica Insurance to retain a loyal base that has been their customers for decades, whether businesses or individuals.

"Some of our clients are businesses that are still operating today or are children of parents who were long-time customers of ours and have passed on the tradition. We are grateful for their loyalty and support and will work hard to continue earning their business," Sablan said. "We are also grateful to all our new clients who decided to 'rest assured' and took a chance on Pacifica. Our clients will always be our

core—they are the lifeblood of our company."

Insurance is one of the important industries in the world and Sablan believes it will continue to be a service needed by everyone, even by those who might not realize it is part of their daily lives.

"When you drive, there's a high chance that the owner of that vehicle has insurance. When you open a business that is financed by a commercial loan, there is a likely chance that it will have insurance. When you see a doctor, a portion of that service bill might be paid by some form of insurance. And when you build that dream home, your mortgage will more than likely require insurance," she said. "This is how Pacifica has been helping to create possibilities and make dreams come true. We have been helping our people and have contributed to the growth and development of our local economy even before we became a U.S. territory. Our company

has seen many firsts in its lifetime and has been there through the best and worst of times."

Sablan said Pacifica Insurance has been tested time and again, but it is determined to continue the path of providing financial security options.

"There is no question what insurance offers to create possibilities and ensure our financial protection. This is why the insurance industry as a whole must be able to operate in a business environment that is conducive for the sake of its survival," she said.

Pacifica Insurance understands how critical insurance is to everyone and promises to continue offering reliable products and services that will be there when coverage will be needed most, Sablan said, with the company being committed to helping others and promising that they will work diligently to make sure that they meet the insurance needs of CNMI residents and businesses alike.

By JON PEREZ
CORRESPONDENT

Pacifica Insurance embraces technology to benefit its clients

Many technological advances have played vital roles in benefitting human beings. Modernizing industries like manufacturing, agriculture, mining, transportation, construction, and communication have made our lives easier.

The insurance industry is no exception to this, with Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. taking advantage of these technological advances for five decades to enable it to provide better services to its clients.

PIUI president and chief executive officer Shirley Sablan said technology has always been synonymous with the future and businesses and industries need to adapt to this constantly evolving climate.

"Technology is as basic as it can get. Businesses must acclimate to the constantly evolving and tech-driven environment with processes that require consumers to transmit, correspond, and transact digitally," she said.

Sablan went on to say that "technology has become the apparatus of change and has revolutionized the insurance industry globally.

"While some of us are slowly adjusting to these technological advancements, other

more advanced parts of the world have already begun to fully utilize technology to streamline the process and improve customer experience," she said.

Sablan points out that many processes have been automated, and marketing strategies have expanded exponentially to embrace the ease with which everyone communicates—via emails, social media, livestreams, podcasts, and similar online social platforms—to get the message across. She cited recent research that shows that roughly 97% of Americans now have access to a smartphone of some kind.

"There is no question that technology is our future," she said.

The world is now connected through the internet with computers, smartphones, tablets and other gadgets being used in classrooms, homes, and offices, Sablan said, which is why Pacifica Insurance is also investing heavily in technology.

"We want to cater to the changing consumer habits and consumption. There are many moving parts to



consider when making operational changes in an insurance agency, especially with the use of technology because we manage sensitive materials," said Sablan.

"Such changes must also be compliant with regulations and can work seamlessly with the technology being used by our partners. For the most part, however, our company is already utilizing ev-

ery form of basic technology available in the market."

Sablan said Pacifica Insurance is also mindful that there is still a large number of their clients who prefer the traditional platforms of doing business with them, like face-to-face meetings, and she assures them of maintaining the customary services for their continued comfort.

An example is that Paci-

fica Insurance policyholders now have an option of receiving their documents, receipts, and other information through email, but they can still choose to get these by regular mail through the U.S. Postal Service.

Sablan remains cautious, though. She acknowledges that technology is a great tool, but there are still some aspects of these advances

that need further study, like the nearly sudden rise of artificial intelligence, or AI, which may also expose businesses to financial risks that would warrant stronger protections.

"AI will be the norm in the coming years, but like everything else, (and I do not speak as an IT expert, but rather simply using common sense,) this new technology might still be in its [early] phase, so to speak. If used [correctly], AI could be a game-changer for businesses, especially in the service industry. However, because of the nature of insurance, AI must be used only if it will not compromise business operations," said Sablan.

Still, there remains opportunities for the insurance industry as a whole to fully utilize available technology to streamline processes and make it easier for insurance companies, the insured, regulators, law enforcement officers, and employers, among others, Sablan said.

"However, there are technological infrastructures that need to be in place for this to happen, some of which are beyond our control as private companies," she said.

That's when the insurance industry comes together to find a common solution. "This is when we collaborate with our friends in the industry to address issues and concerns as a group."

Cheers to five decades of trust,
resilience, and unparalleled service
in the insurance industry.

Happy 50th
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PIUI's outstanding employees thru the years

By JON PEREZ
CORRESPONDENT

Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. will not be where they are right now if not for its employees who have gone above and beyond in contributing to the company's success. Aside from the founders, boards, and officers, all employees past and present have all made an impact in the company, as these employees played great roles in shaping the company's success.

Here are few of some outstanding Pacifica Insurance employees whose dedication and commitment ensured that clients get the best service and insurance protection all these years.

PAST KEY PERSONNEL

STAN WAKI worked with Pacifica Insurance for roughly 30 years before his untimely death. He worked alongside current board chair Norman Tenorio and was responsible for the overall operation of the insurance agency.

SIDNEY QUAN (Sr.) played an important role in building



The Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. team, led by company president and chief executive officer Shirley Sablan, seated center.

the company's life insurance department, which offers term and whole individual and group life plans.

JOANNE DELEON GUERRE-RO worked for Pacifica for 22 years, helping to underwrite commercial lines and service life clients.

JOSE A. TENORIO worked for Pacifica for 11 years, overseeing the claims department.

He played an important role in the claims handling of Super Typhoon Soudelor.

JANEL PANGELINAN was with the company close to 10 years. She was an underwriter and a claims department supervisor who helped with Super Typhoons Soudelor and Yutu.

SAMANTHA SIKAYUN was a former broker department

supervisor and marketing coordinator. She helped Pacifica receive recognition for having "best ad concepts" with the *Guam Business Magazine*.

SHIGEKI TENORIO was the company's first operations manager, overseeing both claims and underwriting.

CURRENT KEY PERSONNEL

JESSICA SABLAN was recently promoted as operations manager, and with 24 years of service, she is the longest serving employee active in the operation today. She is a jack-of-all trades, having held positions in various departments of the company.

GLORIA JANE MADARANG is the accounting manager and oversees all financing

and accounting matters. She has been with the company for 11 years. She is instrumental in ensuring sound fiscal management.

KEOMI PALACIOS-RABAU-LIMAN has been with the company for 11 years and oversees the automobile department. She is also a licensed life insurance agent.

FRANCINE CAMACHO supervises the company's health department that manages a couple of private and government group health plans. She just celebrated her fifth anniversary with the company this year.

DANA MARIE MANGLONA is a commercial underwriter and was previously the auto department supervisor. She's been with the company for roughly eight years now.

DIONNE CAMACHO supervises the company's broker department and helps with outreach and promotions as a marketing coordinator. She is also celebrating five years of service.

SHEELA SARAFF supervises the claims department. She has been with the company for roughly five years now.

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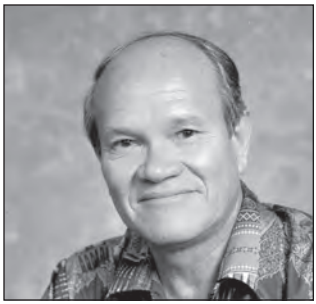
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Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. founder Jose "Joeten" C. Tenorio. PIUI



Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. founder Joe Screen. PIUI



Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. founder Edward Terlaje. PIUI



Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. founder Pete Ada Jr. PIUI



Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. founder Tatsuru Ariizumi. PIUI



Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. founder Tokugoro Kuribayashi. PIUI

By **CHERRIE ANNE E. VILLAHERMOSA**
CORRESPONDENT

PACIFICA INSURANCE UNDERWRITERS INC. Then and now

Pacifica Insurance always comes to mind when we talk of insurance, not only because it is one of the most established insurance companies in the CNMI, but also because of its successes and existence through decades of operation that speaks well of its longevity, reliability, and quality service.

Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. was established in 1973 by the late Jose C. Tenorio, better known as Joeten, and Joseph "Joe" Screen, with the help of the Kuribayashi family through their company, Nanyo Boeki Kaisha (NBK), which was instrumental in the establishment of a business partnership with Nanbo Insurance, at that time the managing general agent of Japan's oldest insurance carrier, Tokio Marine & Fire Insurance Limited (TMI), in Guam. That later led to the appointment of the newly formed PIUI as TMI's exclusive MGA in the CNMI. It was a shared vision by a group of business associates who were looking for ways to help the Marianas develop economically by way of insurance.

That vision has been passed on to the second and third generations of the Joeten, Kuribayashi, Screen, Ada, and Terlaje families.

Before Pacifica's establishment...

Joeten had his first taste of managing an insurance company in the mid-'60s while working with businessman Ernie Milne. The two founded the first known locally established insurance agency in the CNMI, the Micronesian Insurance Underwriters, or MIU. That initial foray made Joeten realize that the Marianas needed a partner in insurance to enhance its ability to undertake larger risks that would attract serious investors and thereby create an economy that he hoped would sufficiently support the local population.

In simpler terms, Joeten wanted to enable the local community to have a real chance of acquiring loans to build their dream home,

buy cars, open their own businesses, and obtain reliable insurance that will protect them.

Also, this desire to expand into the insurance industry was a direct result of Tenorio's personal journey as a businessman. He was engaged in a variety of businesses such as retail, wholesale, hospitality, shipping, gasoline, auto dealership, stevedoring, pharmacy, banking, manufacturing, among other lists of businesses. That all meant he needed to have his business assets protected.

That objective was realized when he co-founded Pacifica Insurance Underwriters Inc. in the early '70s. Tenorio believed that, with the reputation he has established in the business industry, and with the help of his wife, Soledad "Daidai" Tenorio, who is not only an influential figure in the CNMI but was herself a mover and shaker in the business community, they could leverage their business stature to build and strengthen professional relationships that would benefit the entire community.

Fortunately, Tenorio had a strong partner in the person of Joe Screen, who shared the same vision with Tenorio, and firmly believed in insurance. Screen helped to establish PIUI's operation in the Marianas region and played a major role in helping secure PIUI's appointment as Tokio Marine & Fire Insurance Limited's managing general agent in the CNMI, thanks to the help of its regional partner in Guam, Nanbo Insurance, TMI's managing general agent in Guam at the time.

With the help of the Kuribayashi family through their company, the Nanyo Boeki Kaisha, or NBK, they were instrumental in the establishment of a partnership that shaped the company into becoming a full-fledged and full-line insurance agency that offers coverages beyond the standard property and casualty.

When PIUI opened for business, that then helped to establish an industry that was vital to the economic growth and development of the CNMI.

Today, PIUI has become one of the leading insurance firms in the CNMI and is now under the leadership of Shirley Sablan, who is presently the company's president and CEO.

Under Sablan's helm, the company has experienced exponential growth and further product diversification and added partnerships to broaden insurance options and enhance capacity.

Sablan said their everyday objective is to provide insurance and assurance for times of uncertainties and to help with personal and commercial financial risk management to prevent potentially catastrophic losses.

"We make the promise of peace of mind and guarantee that we will be there for those covered losses. Whether it's owning a home, opening a business or hiring employees, there will be risk exposures that will naturally become the fundamental purpose of insurance," Sablan said.

Sablan knows all too well the vital role that insurance plays in any community, having led the company through two of the CNMI's worst natural disasters, Super Typhoon Yutu and Typhoon Soudebor, and the 2019 COVID-19 pandemic.

The men and women behind PIUI

The founders and shareholders of PIUI include the late Joeten, his wife, Soledad, their children Annie, Clarence, Patricia, Frances, Norman, Priscilla; Screen, whose shares were passed on to his son, Stephen Alex Screen; Nanyo Boeki Kaisha of the Kuribayashi family; Tatsuru Ariizumi, whose shares were donated to the Joeten Daidai Foundation; the late Pete Ada Jr., whose share was passed on to his son, P. Sonny Ada,

and the late Edward Terlaje.

Past corporation directors, officers, and recorders include Jose "Joeten" Tenorio, Tokugoro Kuribayashi, Joe Screen, Tatsuru Ariizumi, Pete Ada Jr., Edward Terlaje, Roman S. Palacios, Patricia Palacios, Clarence T. Tenorio, Akira Inoue, Yoshie Screen, Yukio Kuribayashi, Michael S. Demapan and John Terlaje.

Current corporation directors, officers, and recorder include Norman Tenorio, Annie Sablan, Alex Screen, P. Sonny Ada, Hiroyuki Kuribayashi, Roman T. Palacios, Shirley Sablan, and Mike Terlaje.

Past and present presidents and chief executive officers of PIUI include Roman S. Palacios, Norman Tenorio, and Shirley Ann T. Sablan.

Past general managers include Tatsuru Ariizumi and Estanislao "Stan" Waki.

In the early days of the company, past president and chief executive officer Roman S. Palacios and Tatsuru Ariizumi as NBK representative were key figures in helping the company founders set up the company, from executing the partnership agreements to recruitment, training, and binding the first insurance policy, making sure that the infancy stage of Pacifica Insurance saw a solid foundation that would sustain operations for the years ahead, especially when the CNMI saw good times during the economic boom and when it had to weather the storm through countless devastating natural disasters.

"Whether big or small, both past and present, everyone involved in the making and operating of PIUI had a hand in its success, from the founders and board members, to the management and staff, partners, and our clients, I'll call this group of star individuals Pacifica's web of success because, without them, who knows where we'd be today," Sablan said.

In looking back at the journey of the company, Sablan said every person who as-

sumed the leadership role did extraordinary work and deserve equal credit "but we should also point out that our current chairman of the board, Norman T. Tenorio, had the longest tenure—over 37 years—as its president and CEO. He led the company with determination and strength through the toughest of economic times since stepping in and without a doubt has become a legendary figure in the insurance industry in the CNMI," she added.

PIUI turns 50 years old

Coincidentally, PIUI is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and Sablan said 50 years is already a major accomplishment in and of itself.

"A company will not have reached this milestone if the pieces did not fall into place. We have much to be proud of and our accomplishments can be found in the restoration, recovery, rebuilding, rehabilitation, and protection of the policy holders and members. We will never forget the smiles and thank yous. They were the moments when we knew we did it right."

According to Sablan, however, "there is still room for improvement, but this is true for all industries and professions and we are ready to do it better in the next 50 years."

"Challenges are expected. If there were none, it would be too good to be true and that can be a problem too. A leader is expected to face challenges—direct or indirect, internal or external, big or small—[that] will require the same level of attention and know-how. Shaping the company is only possible if you have the right team with the same level of determination and dedication to get the job done. Luckily for us, we are blessed with the dream team. I always remind our team that, in a service industry, they become the face of the company, which is why we make every effort to support them to ensure their

success," Sablan said, adding it is their love for those who have entrusted PIUI with their financial protections and security that keeps their team going and inspire them to do more.

"Our clients are at our core. We work hard to earn their trust and business. They are the driving force of Pacifica and the lifeblood of our company," she added.

Secret of success

Wisdom, education, focus, honesty, selflessness, goodwill, and having faith are what Sablan considers the secrets behind the company's decades of existence.

"Having faith in a higher power is one. In our business it is important to listen and understand in order to meet or exceed expectations and succeed in our profession," she said.

Future plans

The direction for the next 50 years is to stay the course. Sablan said they will head in the same direction where they adapt to change and offer products and services that are relevant to the times.

"If estimates are right, the years ahead will require our industry to prepare for greater challenges, which means that survival and success will come harder. However, we will continue to invest in our human resources to ensure that our clients receive professional services and adequate coverage where they may find risks. We will find a way to bridge those gaps and fill those voids. Our future will be determined by the support of our community and the partnerships we maintain and develop. Our approach is togetherness because together will always make sense."

"The business of insurance is providing assurance especially when it is most needed. Insurance policies that bind coverage become the promise of financial security and protection. There can be no debate about the importance of insurance because, as long as there are imperfections in life, there will always be a need for it. Instead of taking that chance, we would rather make smart choices and find ways to manage financial risks," Sablan added.

Pacifica: Going beyond insurance

By JON PEREZ
CORRESPONDENT

Helping various causes has always been a part of Pacifica Insurance's corporate social responsibility as they not only provide reliable insurance products but also demonstrate their commitment to addressing the needs of the community.

Since beginning its operations 50 years ago, Pacific Insurance Underwriters Inc. has partnered with and helped in the survival of non-profit organizations to support their initiatives, whether it be social, educational, or environmental causes.

Pacifica Insurance president and CEO Shirley Sablan said the support of businesses like theirs is an important part of pushing the causes being promoted by non-profit organizations like the American Red Cross-CNMI Chapter, Commonwealth Cancer Association, and Rotary Club of Saipan.

Some of the nonprofits that Pacifica regularly supports are the Joeten Daidai Foundation, Mariana Islands Nature Alliance, Northern Marianas Sports Association, Northern Marianas College Foundation, Saipan Fisherman Association, Joeten Kiyu Public Library, Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, Saipan Chamber of Commerce, Tan Siu Lin Foundation, Japanese Society of the Northern Marianas, Ko-



The artwork of Grace Christian Academy 6th grade student En Mei Victoria Huang was the traditional one category winner in this year's edition of the Pacifica Art Contest. PIUI

rean Association of Saipan, Saipan Lions Club, Emon Masonic Lodge, Marianas Outrigger Club, Napu Pacific Paddlers, Stellar Marianas, CNMI Women's Association, and the Northern Marianas Humanities Council, to name a few.

Some of the events that Pacifica provides funding are the CNMI Disability Sports Festival and Toys for Tots program of the U.S. Marine Corps.

The company also has its own environmental awareness campaign through the Pacifica Go Green, while its Pacifica Art Contest has become an institution in the local art scene, providing a highly accessible medium through which the CNMI's young artists can put up their works for the public to enjoy. All the winning artworks are then featured in the annual calendar that Pacifica Insur-

ance hands out to welcome the new year. That means the artworks—submitted by CNMI students—may be seen all year-round through Pacifica Insurance's calendars.

To further widen the audience for the art contest, the company launched this year The PAC Gallery online exhibition to celebrate the 10th year of this annual event. Sablan said the art exhibit has a number of the best artworks that date back to 2014—all of which are in the archives of their online gallery.

"The PAC was designed to support and nurture local talent and the arts in the CNMI,

and the PAC Gallery will be an exhibition of talent in the Marianas ready for your entertainment 24/7, 365 days-a-year in the palm of your hands," said Sablan. "We hope to continue giving our children this platform to tell their stories and share their talent and for educators to have another option to incentivize their pupils to challenge their creativity and help them find the courage and strength to compete in a fair and fun arena."

The Pacifica Go Green campaign, on the other hand, aims to build environmental stewardship in the CNMI where Pacifica Insurance backs many initiatives to ensure the health and protection of the Earth. In line with this, Pacifica Go Green encourages everyone in the CNMI to support the "Make Earth Your Best Friend" campaign.

In a step toward this goal, Pacifica Insurance recently partnered with Evlution Energy to launch the first electric vehicle charging station in the CNMI, located at the Joeten Center in Susupe. This is fantastic news to those who own or are planning to bring home an elec-

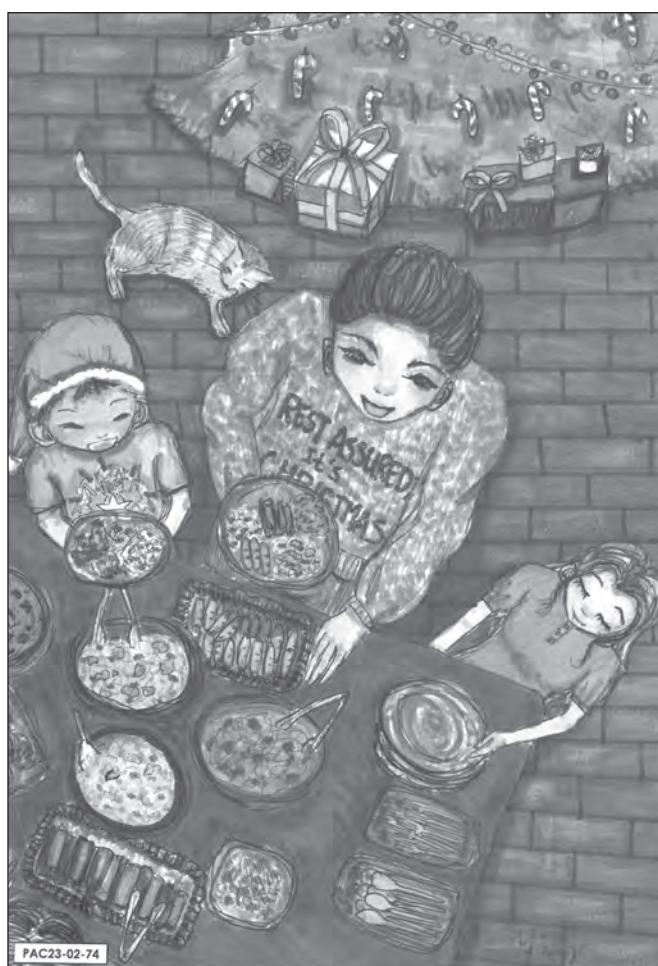
tric vehicle. What's more, charging your EVs will be free until August 2024.

Sablan said this initiative is part of Pacifica Insurance's 50th anniversary celebration and forms part of their

commitment and desire to promote goodwill in the community. Also, this will hopefully encourage CNMI drivers to choose a more environmentally-friendly driving option, she added.



The artwork of Mount Carmel School 11th grade student Tricia Palacios was the digital category winner in this year's edition of the Pacifica Art Contest. PIUI



The artwork of Saipan Southern High School's 9th grade student Yu Rong Jiang was the traditional category two winner in this year's edition of the Pacifica Art Contest. PIUI

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YEARS

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Happy Anniversary



50
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What I Wish for Christmas Drawing Contest

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We also extend our deepest gratitude to our holiday sponsors who are helping the *Saipan Tribune* bring holiday cheer to the children of the Marianas this Christmas season!

*Si Yu'us Ma'ase Yan
Feliz Pasqua Yan Añu Nuebu!*



THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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Putting a spotlight on NMI children's CHRISTMAS Wishes

By **CHERRIE VILLAHERMOSA**
CORRESPONDENT

It's not every holiday when children's Christmas wishes come true, but with *Saipan Tribune* playing Santa this year, anything is possible.

In an effort to share the Christmas spirit and to bring

joy to children as well as cheer them on Christmas Day, *Saipan Tribune* organized this year its first art competition for children ages 6 to 12 years old.

Over 200 participants from various schools in the Northern Mariana Islands participated and submitted entries

See **SPOTLIGHT** on Page 17



The winner of ages 10-12 category, Miel Jewel Lim Mabaquiao, 11, of Green Meadow School, poses for a photo with her winning artwork and prizes during the announcement of winners yesterday at the JP Center conference room in Garapan.

RAYMOND ZAPANTA

Wishing all a festive holiday season full of laughter, love, and joy.

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and a
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From the staff and management



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SPOTLIGHT

From page 16

for the themed contest, called "What I Wish for Christmas." Participants were asked to draw their Christmas wishes in watercolor, poster color, acrylic, crayons, or color pencils, and then were asked to describe their drawings and why they made those specific wishes.

A lot of the children drew simple wishes like getting toys, teddy bears, basketballs, soccer balls, drawing materials, clothes, shoes, or pets like puppies and kittens, to name a few. There were also heart-tugging wishes for world peace and wanting to spend time with parents or be reunited with off-island family members.

Granted wishes

The children's heartwarming wishes touched the hearts of TanHoldings management and employees and many of them made a point to grant as many wishes they could where possible. A child who wished to spend time with family on Christmas Day was given gift certificates so the family could eat out together.

The overarching goal of *Saipan Tribune* was to make the children happy and to

See SPOTLIGHT on Page 19



The winner of ages 8-9 category, Yohan Jeong, 8, from Oleai Elementary School, smiles as he poses for a photo with his winning artwork and prizes during the announcement of winners yesterday at the JP Center conference room in Garapan. RAYMOND ZAPANTA

May your home be filled with the warmth of family and the joy of the season.

Merry Christmas!

FROM THE MANAGEMENT & STAFF OF

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RAYMOND ZAPANTA

SPOTLIGHT

From page 17

granted the wishes where possible.

Art contest

All entries were submitted to JP Center and were judged

See SPOTLIGHT on Page 20

grant as many wishes as possible. The employees randomly picked entries and

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Christmas
& Happy Newyear

May the spirit of Christmas be with
you all year round.

From the

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SPOTLIGHT

From page 19

by Jose Roberto Aguilar,
Saipan Tribune's Graphic Arts
team leader, and Raymond
Zapanta of L&T.

The contest started on
Dec. 6 and ended on Dec. 19,
2023. The awarding ceremony
was held last Dec. 21, at
the JP Center. *Saipan Tribune*
sales supervisor Edna Nisola
led the awarding ceremony.
See SPOTLIGHT on Page 23



Honorable mention Ai Nonogaki, 8, from William S. Reyes poses for a photo with her winning artwork and prizes during the announcement of winners yesterday at the JP Center conference room in Garapan.

RAYMOND ZAPANTA

POKKA P

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Honorable mention Tyler Kang, 6, of Saipan Community School, poses for a photo with his winning artwork and prizes during the announcement of winners yesterday at the JP Center conference room in Garapan.

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The winners and gift recipients of the What I Wish for Christmas Drawing Contest pose for a photo during the announcement of winners yesterday at the JP Center conference room in Garapan.

RAYMOND ZAPANTA

SPOTLIGHT

From page 20

The winner in the ages 6-7 category was Colin Lillies, 7, who is in 2nd grade at Green Meadow School. The winner in the age 8-9 category was Yohan Jeong, 8, of Oleai Elementary School, while the winner in the age 10-12 category was Miel Jewel Lim

Mabaquiao, 11, of Green Meadow School.

The winners received certificates of recognition, \$100 cash prizes, Marpac gift baskets, and gift certificates from Kyokushinkai Karate and Chowtime.

Honorable mention honors went to Ai Nonogaki, 8, of William S. Reyes; and Jusam Jae, 6, of Saipan Community School. See SPOTLIGHT on Page 24



Aileen Kim, 9, of Saipan Community School, whose drawing about a Christmas party received a Special Creative Award, poses for a photo during the announcement of winners yesterday at the JP Center conference room in Garapan.

RAYMOND ZAPANTA

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All things together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. **Romans: 8:28**

SPOTLIGHT

From page 23

School. They both received cash prizes, recognitions, and gift certificates.

Five participants were also given Special Creative Awards: Aileen Kim, 9, Seung Jun Moon, 9, both from

Saipan Community School; Yoonmin Cho, 9, of Saipan International School; Clover Haryn Cha, 6, of Grace Christian Academy and Jenny Quin, 6 of Sinapalo Elementary School. The Special Creative awardee were given recognitions, cash prizes, and gift certificates.

See SPOTLIGHT on Page 25



Special Creative Awardee Seung Jun Moon, 9, of Saipan Community School, poses for a photo with his winning artwork during the announcement of winners yesterday at the JP Center conference room in Garapan.

RAYMOND ZAPANTA

RAYMOND ZAPANTA



Special Creative Awardee Clover Haryn Cha, 6, of Grace Christian Academy, poses for a photo with her winning artwork during the announcement of winners yesterday at the JP Center conference room in Garapan.

RAYMOND ZAPANTA

RAYMOND ZAPANTA



Special Creative Awardee Yoonmin Cho, 9, of Saipan International School, poses for a photo with her winning artwork during the announcement of winners yesterday at the JP Center conference room in Garapan.

RAYMOND ZAPANTA

SPOTLIGHT

From page 24

Sponsors, participants

Saipan Tribune would like to thank the wonderful sponsors that made the art contest a huge success: Tan Holdings Corp. and its philanthropic arm, the Tan Siu Lin Foundation; Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, E-Land, Century Insurance Co. Ltd, McDonald's, P&A Community Corp. - International Roller Skates, Brabu Pharmacy, Chowtime, Saipan Mayor's Office and Mayor Ramon "RB" Camacho, Saipan Shipping, Kyokushinkai Karate, CTSI Logistics, Old Spice, D&Q, Jet Holdings Co., RNV Construction, Lollipops, Girl Talk, and Bridge Capital.

Children from all over the CNMI participated in the art contest, including students from Grace Christian Academy, Sinapalo Elementary School on Rota, Garapan Elementary School, Kagman Elementary School, Koblerville Elementary School, Green Meadows School, William S.

Reyes Elementary School, Northern Marianas International School, Oleai Elementary School, Saipan Community School, Saipan International School, and Hopwood Middle School.

"We hosted the drawing contest with a heartfelt commitment to embody the spirit of giving this Christmas and make this festive season truly special for everyone involved. Our goal was to bring joy to the hearts of children during this magical time while fostering their creativity and artistic expression," said Nisola. "We hope that this contest inspired a sense of wonder and imagination to all who participated and created a wonderful opportunity for our valued business partners and community to express their love and generosity. Thank you to all of our sponsors for sharing your blessings and making this contest possible. Congratulations to all of our participants and winners. We hope that you continue to shine bright in your endeavors this coming year. Merry Christmas!"

Wishing you a Christmas filled with the warmth of family, the joy of friends, and the love of Christ.

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&
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From the management and staff of



Tan Siu Lin
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Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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EDITORIAL

Why Biden can't convince voters he's beat inflation

Economic happy talk doesn't lower mortgage payments. It's one reason Bidenomics remains deeply unpopular.

President Joe Biden wants the public to believe that the economy is doing great. At a recent campaign event, Biden bragged that he had overseen "record job creation, historic economic growth, (and) among the lowest inflation rates of any major economy in the world." The White House frequently touts Bidenomics. His administration even claims, "Bidenomics is working."

His allies in the media are pushing this narrative, too. "Biden goes into 2024 with the economy getting stronger, but voters feel horrible about it," The Associated Press wrote recently.

New York Times writer Nate Cohn suggested the problem was vibes, not economic. "It's harder to argue that voters should believe the economy is outright terrible, even after accounting for inflation," he wrote.

The subtext is clear: Biden has worked wonders on the economy—if only those dumb voters would realize it.

At least they have one thing right. The public strongly disapproves of Biden's handling of the economy. A recent Wall Street Journal poll found just 30% of those surveyed had a favorable view of "Bidenomics," with more than half viewing it unfavorably. A majority also said Biden's policies have hurt them personally. Two-thirds of voters said the economy is poor or not good. Two-thirds also said the economy has declined over the past two years.

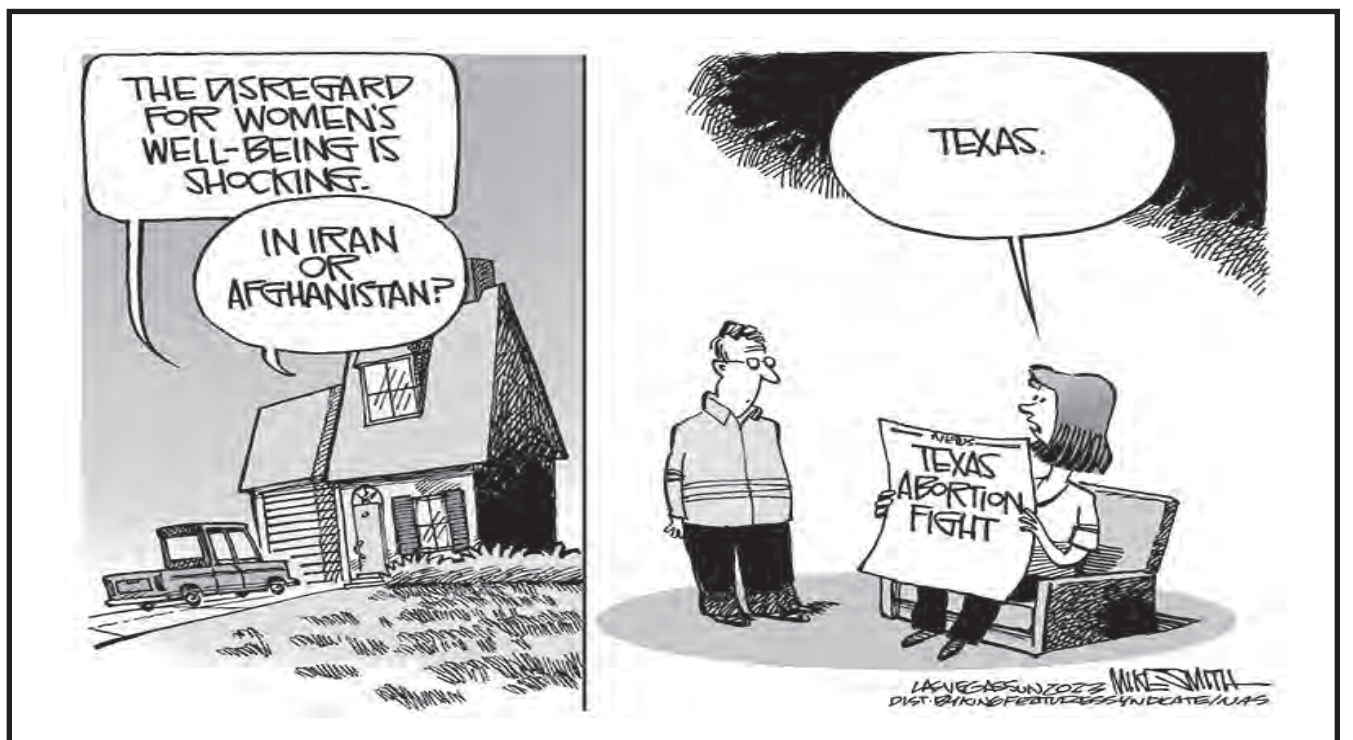
Those numbers reflect a brutal reality, even if insulated progressive elites are blind to it. Biden's problem is runaway inflation. Real disposable income has fallen 7.5% since Biden took office, according to the Heritage Foundation. Prices for many food items are up 20 to 30%. Vehicle costs—such as gasoline, insurance and repairs—are up more than 35%.

While inflation has slowed, prices for almost everything remain elevated from pre-pandemic levels. To fight the rising costs triggered by Biden's unprecedented spending spree, the Fed has jacked up interest rates.

This hits hardest in housing costs. As the Journal reported, "It is now less affordable than any time in recent history to buy a home." Increased interest rates dramatically increase mortgage payments. New buyers can't afford a starter home. Current mortgage holders can't afford to lose their 3% interest rate and move to a bigger home. Many are abandoning their dreams of home ownership entirely.

Simply put: The president seems oblivious to the reality on the ground. Ultimately, that could cost him dearly.

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Extremists on both sides of Israel-Hamas War are determined to kill a two-state solution

When our family lived in Jerusalem in the mid-1990s—where I was working as the Tribune's Middle East correspondent—we were awed by the hope among both Israelis and Palestinians that the 1993 Oslo Accords might end their age-old conflict. The agreement signed on the White House lawn that year gave real hope for peace in modern times.

Then an extremist Jewish settler slaughtered 29 Palestinian men and boys as they knelt in prayer in a Hebron mosque in 1994. Hamas suicide bombers blew up buses to butcher Israelis on Jerusalem's streets. A Jewish extremist shot and killed Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at a peace rally in Tel Aviv in 1995. People on both sides overwhelmingly supported the Oslo process, but hateful extremists in each camp refused to share the Holy Land. So, they started killing Oslo. Thirty years later, its promise remains on life support.

Today, new extremists on both sides are determined to drive nails into any possible peaceful resolution to the conflict and the dream of a two-state solution. President Joe Biden must not let that happen. Too much is at stake. The impact of the brutal war raging in the destitute Gaza Strip echoes way beyond the Middle East and could radicalize a new generation of terrorists.

Since the bloody, barbaric attack by Hamas on Oct. 7 massacred 1,200 Israeli men, women, children and elderly near Gaza and touched off the war, there has been no concrete plan advanced by the combatants for the day after the fighting between Israel and Hamas stops—whether it's weeks from now, or perhaps, months away.

Biden needs to start working forcefully now to outline that vision and build support for it among Israelis and Palestinians, as well as allies in the region and around the globe. Both sides must see a horizon with hope, security and justice, or they will face endless violence, war and death. There is no military solution to this conflict. Only a two-state endgame offers a viable, long-term political solution that could one day work—even if, after all this trauma, it takes years to happen.

The president should lay out the strategy in a prime-time Oval Office address and call on moderate Arab states, the European Union and the U.N. for support. Arab states will not be eager to help fund the reconstruction of Gaza without a serious commitment to a two-state pathway.

It likely will require leadership changes. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a longtime opponent of two states. That's a problem. His failure to focus sufficiently on Israel's security may have left Israel vulnerable to attack near Gaza, and his days as prime minister could be numbered. A formal commission of inquiry should await him at the end of the war. Israelis are demanding accountability. His popularity has fallen in polls, and 80% of Israelis believe he should accept responsibility for the staggering failures in security that led to the Oct. 7 attacks.

"The only way we believe there can be a successful vision for the day after is with a different Israeli government," said Adina Vogel-Ayalon, chief of staff of J Street in Washington, D.C., a pro-Israel, pro-peace organization advocating for U.S. policies that promote Jewish and democratic values for Israel.

"That is one of the many obstacles at this moment in time," she

By STORER H. ROWLEY
Chicago Tribune

Storer H. Rowley, a former national editor and foreign correspondent for the Chicago Tribune, teaches journalism and communication at Northwestern University.



told me. "This Israeli government is resisting every plan for the day after that this administration has been promoting." J Street advocates for post-conflict arrangements that establish a path to an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel in the future, and steps to get there successfully.

In the middle of this horrifying war, this may seem like a pipe dream, but the sheer scale of this violence could ultimately shock the two parties into the realization that war is not the answer. The Yom Kippur War led, years later, to Camp David and an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty.

For the Palestinian Authority, increasingly ineffective and unpopular under President Mahmoud Abbas, elections must be held in the West Bank and Gaza after the war to revitalize the self-rule government, so eventually it can take over governing Gaza from a transitional authority of some kind when Israel pulls out. Netanyahu has said Israeli forces will stay there indefinitely, but Biden has rightly warned Israel not to reoccupy Gaza. That would be a mistake that could further radicalize Gazans and prolong conflict. Unlike Hamas, the Palestinian Authority is committed to a negotiated solution, and Biden envoys are right to seek a security role for it in Gaza.

By pledging America's ironclad support to Israel during the last 70 days of war in Gaza, the United States now owns this conflict too. The Biden administration must use its leverage with Israel to help end it, as soon as possible, once Israel decimates Hamas, and to help ensure a transition first to a multinational force, and ultimately, to the Palestinian Authority.

Israel has every right to defend itself. Hamas is a terrorist organization that has no interest in peace. Make no mistake, its goal is to kill Jews and destroy Israel. Its Oct. 7 attack was the deadliest massacre of Jewish people since the Holocaust. Hamas has pledged to do it again. It puts Gazan civilians in the crossfire and hides under hospitals. Israel cannot and should not have to live with that threat on its border. America wouldn't.

Hamas took 240 hostages on Oct. 7, and an estimated 135 of them—including 10 Americans—remain captive in the dark tunnels under Gaza. The atrocities, rapes and murders of Israelis were unspeakable. Some of the dead were so badly burned or mutilated that they are only now being identified through DNA. The trauma is ongoing, and so are the funerals.

"Everyone walks around pretending to be normal," one Israeli friend told me, "but the whole country is suffering from trauma. It will be years until Israel begins to resemble its old self."

Israel's retaliation has been fierce. The Israeli military campaign

See **EXTREMISTS** on Page 29

Why this Congress can't get much done

When Republicans narrowly captured the House last year, most analysts predicted they would do more investigating than legislating. Unfortunately, that has proven to be true.

Indeed, its final full week epitomized the entire first session of the “do nothing” 118th Congress.

House Republicans launched an impeachment investigation of President Joe Biden, though many supporters acknowledged a year of probes had not uncovered the proverbial “smoking gun.” Then, they went home.

GOP members in both chambers blocked more aid for Ukraine—while declaring how much they support the embattled country’s fight against Russian invaders. They are demanding tough new measures to curb illegal immigration—though no Congress has been able to agree on anything for the border in years.

The numbers tell the story. According to congress.gov, only 22 bills have become law so far this year, of which just three were significant—keeping the government open. Five others are pending, including the measure setting defense policy, which both houses passed last week.

On all four, House leaders needed Democratic votes, despite the opposition by some right-wing Republicans against such bipartisanship that led to the historic vote to oust Rep. Kevin McCarthy as speaker.

The main problem has been the proclivity of House Republicans to load even essential measures like appropriations bills with conservative wish list items ranging from abortion restrictions to reduced spending for social programs.

With Democrats holding both the Senate and the White House, there was no way for their initiatives to become law. But their inclusion did gum up the legislative works; House Republicans were even unable to pass some of their own funding measures because of internal divisions.

The one thing that seemed to unite the House GOP was retaliation against the Democrats for various actions during their years in the majority, including the two impeachments of former President Donald Trump.

House Republicans censured three Democrats, one for anti-Israel statements after the Oct. 7 Hamas invasion, one for setting off a false fire alarm to delay a vote and Rep. Adam Schiff of California, for his actions in the investigation of Trump for pressuring Ukraine to probe Biden.

And they agreed unanimously to give formal authority to three committees to pursue the investigation against the president that they actually began before the GOP won the House in 2022.

In recent weeks, Republicans have suggested they are pursuing two main lines of inquiry against him. In both, prospective charges have already been proven false.

One initially surfaced in 2019, when Trump was impeached for withholding congressionally approved arms shipments to Ukraine

unless President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reopened an investigation into Biden’s role as vice president in firing Ukraine’s public prosecutor, Viktor Shokin.

The false allegation was that Biden acted to protect his son and halt an investigation into Burisma, the Ukrainian oil company that paid Hunter Biden vast amounts of money for questionable purposes.

But former U.S. Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch and other U.S. officials have confirmed he was acting on behalf of President Barack Obama and major U.S. allies, because Shokin was considered corrupt; there is no evidence he was investigating Burisma at the time.

The second allegation, oft repeated by many Republican critics without any proof, is that President Biden benefited financially from his son’s lucrative dealings in Ukraine and China. The House Oversight Committee released documents showing one of Hunter Biden’s businesses made three payments totaling \$1,380 to his father. They turned out to be repayments of a loan to help him buy a Ford truck.

In recent weeks, several reluctant GOP supporters of the impeachment probe have cited the resistance of some Biden administration officials to supplying some of the thousands of pages of documents they have sought as reasons for their votes. It’s hard to see how that alone would meet the Constitution’s impeachment standard of “high Crimes and Misdemeanors.”

But GOP members have been under strong pressure from Trump and his supporters to impeach Biden in retaliation for the Democrats’ impeachment of Trump and even to “expunge” the latter actions from the record. One Republican, Texas Rep. Troy Nehls, gave this reply when asked to explain the GOP’s impeachment drive: “All I can say is Donald J. Trump 2024 baby.”

GOP lawmakers have also been conducting a potential impeachment probe of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for being “derelict” in handling illegal immigration. And a special panel has been investigating the Biden administration’s alleged “political weaponization” of the Justice Department and intelligence agencies.

Meanwhile, the Senate’s Democratic majority has often been hamstrung by the GOP minority or individual Republicans. Though GOP Leader Mitch McConnell strongly advocated helping Ukraine, he acquiesced in the demands of fellow Republicans to condition it on major policy changes on immigration.

As a result, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has been unable to muster the 60 votes needed to pass the administration’s proposal of additional funding for Ukraine, Israel, Taiwan and the border. Negotiations on the package are continuing but, even if the Senate agrees, House Speaker Mike Johnson says the House won’t consider aid for Ukraine.

This will all need to be resolved when lawmakers return in January. But everything that prevented action this year

By **CARL P. LEUBSDORF**

The Dallas Morning News



Carl P. Leubsdorf is the former Washington bureau chief of the Dallas Morning News.

will still be present, exacerbated by the pressures of the presidential campaign.

As a result, it will likely prove difficult for this Congress to keep the government open, let alone do anything else.

EXTREMISTS

From page 28

has leveled much of Gaza’s infrastructure and claimed the lives of at least 18,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gazan health officials. Some 80% of the population of 2.3 million has been displaced. Israel estimates thousands of Hamas fighters have died. Still, the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding there is raising alarm around the world. Biden’s unwavering support remains strong, but his administration is calling on Israel for a more targeted strategy.

“I want them to be focused on how to save civilian lives. Not stop going after Hamas, but be more careful,” Biden said last week, warning that Israel could lose international support because of the “indiscriminate bombing that takes place.”

One Palestinian friend lost 14 members of his extended family in the bombing. “It’s so painful,” he wrote to me, “when one, every two or three hours, searches the lists of the death toll with fear of finding names of his relatives or friends.”

The fear is that the longer this goes on, the more radical the Palestinian population will become, so that any plan for peace, stabilization and reconstruction the day after the war will be harder to achieve.

“I don’t think there is a day after. I don’t think this is going to stop,” observed Rashid Khalidi, co-editor of the Journal of Palestine Studies and professor of modern Arab studies at Columbia University. “I don’t think the Israelis will bring resistance to an end. I don’t think there is a stable Gaza coming.”

“The fighters they kill will have little brothers and others who will go on fighting for years,” Khalidi told me. “What they have done is produced a situation that is not going to have a clear end.”

That is the challenge, but Biden has to forge bold diplomacy and lay out the road map for a better future for Israelis and Palestinians. There have been five wars over the past 15 years, and this is by far the deadliest. Clearly, Israel’s strategy of blockading and containing Gazans in an open-air prison, as some call it, is not succeeding. Netanyahu’s strategy has left Israelis more at risk.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has also warned Israeli leaders they might win a tactical victory against Hamas but risk “strategic defeat” in the long run if they fail to heed warnings about the impact of the rising civilian death toll.

The U.S. must support Israel’s effort to degrade Hamas so that it is no longer a threat, but it should continue to urge a more careful military strategy within the bounds of international law to protect Palestinian civilians who had nothing to do with the Hamas attack. The pressure campaign may eventually lead to another pause in the fighting to allow Hamas to give up more hostages, but Hamas leaders are not likely to leave Gaza. They know Israelis will hunt them down when they come out of their tunnels, as well it should. They must be driven out.

When the war ends, the U.S. must lead an international campaign to restore all humanitarian aid and rebuild Gaza, along with the Israeli communities attacked by Hamas. Israelis must have security guarantees they will be safe in the aftermath, and Palestinians must be offered hope for justice and self-determination in Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

When distributing U.S. military aid, Biden should join a group of Democratic senators insisting it should come with zero tolerance for settler violence, settlement expansion, blockades and the expulsion of Arabs from their homes or villages. Some extremist, anti-Arab members in Netanyahu’s coalition continue to provoke violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.

Both sides deserve peace, economic opportunity and a safe place to raise their children. They pledged at Oslo to work together toward those goals. That work remains unfinished.

It may seem naive—even a fool’s errand—to talk about peace plans at a time like this. The wounds on both sides are so deep, it may take years to get the parties back to the table, let alone trust that there is a true partner for peace on the other side. But that is the only way this ends without more violence, with a two-state outcome and two peoples living side by side in peace.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A leap of faith in China

The truth of the matter is I believe the Senate has leaped before they looked, which is a big no-no! We learn in our formative years to “look before you leap” and yet the Senate seems to have jumped off the EVS-TAP cliff without doing their homework (knowing it will work).

Based on what I have read, the Senate was following Hof-schnieder based on his word. I do want to thank our Delegate Kilili for weighing in to support the EVS-TAP, which relieved some of the trepidation fearing Washington might be angered by the EVS-TAP for Chinese. But I have to respect Kilili’s judgment as he knows more about the temperament of the U.S. Congress than I do. But it is exactly issues like this is the reason I wrote about the need for other officials to weigh-in on issues because I trust Kilili far more than Jude.

However, there is still the dilemma as to “what will the Chinese government do?” and “what will be the response of Congress?” So to a large degree the CNMI is taking a “leap of faith” without knowing what the final results will be, which has been my concern all along with this matter. Then there is also the Japanese tourist market that needs to be considered, especially when the geopolitical theater is so uncertain with China. I just know things (the variables) have changed since Trump because the present lawmakers and President in Washington views anything “Trump or China” as bad news, especially when the fight against and for immigration is a very hot topic now in D.C.! Good luck, as they say.

The CNMI will literally be playing with fire that can even spread if this quest for the EVS-TAP backfires and more often than not people get burned playing with fire. I do know that the






CWs complained and now the Feds control our immigrations and the CWs have to leave by 2029. History has taught that trying to circumvent the power of the Feds with this EVS-TAP without so much as a word or attempt to gain any consensus with our-fathers-in-Washington is playing with fire! My biggest concern has always been the government of China as we have no influence on their decisions and there is the fact that there is always something negative or adverse in America that is associated with China. The future will certainly be very uncertain at the very least with this leap of faith to China.

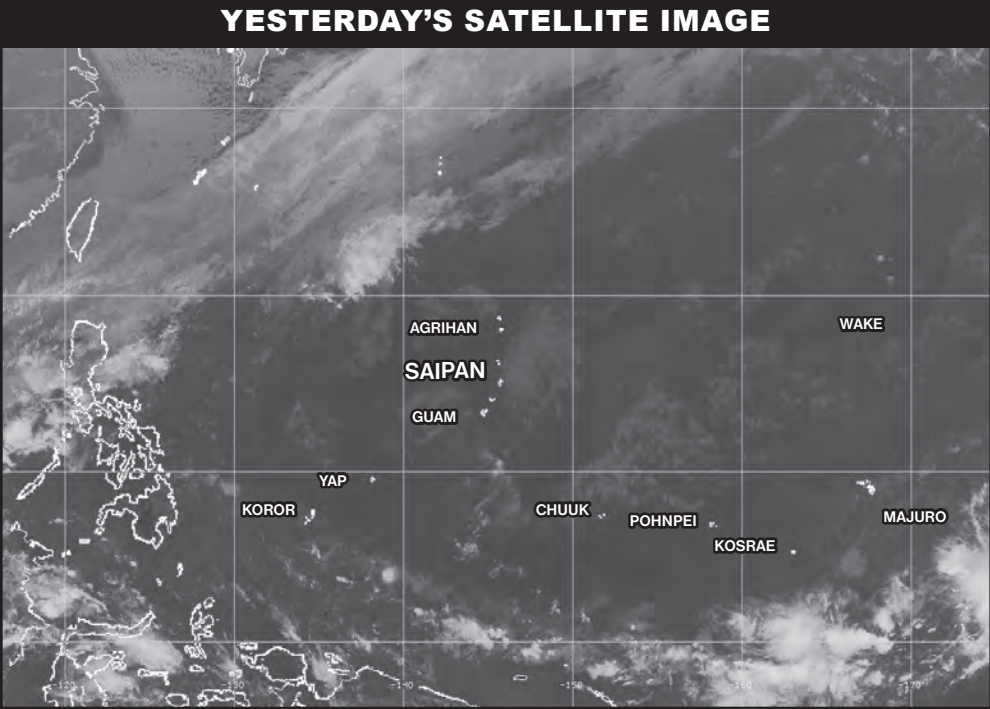
I guess the decision has been made to “forget about Japan,” with all this focus on China which I view as an awful mistake, as China may be a quick-fix like the Casino but we see how that turned out. The CNMI will be “all-in for China,” again, as the Japanese are not going to mix with the Chinese here regardless of their economy nor what we do. Our governor chose wise and safe with Japan but the business sector wants China which is where we stand as a people caught in the middle again facing genuine economic disagreement and uncertainty. But this is one time that I pray I’m wrong, as I can only pray Kilili is right and there won’t be any backlash from D.C. I also wish well for the business community and all of us, if we continue down the road to China. The failed casino has already proved the lost Japanese market and we can’t trust China’s Government that is part of the RICO case for putting money in Ralph DLG Torres’ election and the fact that it’s never a good idea to get in bed with America’s rivals. I still believe our leaders need to be trying to work with our ally Japan as their will be fewer risk over time, as we don’t know what can happen with a “leap of faith in China.”

Ambrose M. Bennett

Kagman III

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY	
									
Becoming breezy saturday. Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East to northeast winds 10 to 20 mph.		Becoming breezy saturday. Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East to northeast winds 10 to 20 mph.		Breezy to windy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.		Breezy to windy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.		Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	
87	78°	87	78°	86	77°	86	77°	86	77°



PICTURE TIME: 4:44 AM THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite indicating partly to mostly cloudy skies with mainly isolated trade showers this morning. Latest buoy and altimetry passes showing seas 6 to 9 feet. Winds are moderate to fresh.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: <https://www.weather.gov/gum/>

MICRONESIA			▲▼°F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	88° / 79°	
Palau	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 79°	
Yap	Partly Cloudy	88° / 79°	
Chuuk	Fair	87° / 81°	
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°	
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°	
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 81°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:38 AM	5:52 PM
Saturday	6:38 AM	5:52 PM
Sunday	6:39 AM	5:53 PM
Monday	6:39 AM	5:53 PM
Tuesday	6:40 AM	5:54 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	1:54 AM	1:55 PM
Saturday	-	2:50 AM	2:37 PM
Sunday	-	3:47 AM	3:23 PM
Monday	-	4:45 AM	4:13 PM
Tuesday	-	5:45 AM	5:06 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲▼°F
Auckland	Fair	73° / 63°	
Beijing	Fair/Wind	17° / 7°	
Hong Kong	Mostly Cloudy	58° / 47°	
Honolulu	Mostly Cloudy	82° / 70°	
London	Cloudy	45° / 36°	
Los Angeles	Sunny	65° / 44°	
Manila	Rain	81° / 73°	
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	91° / 75°	
Miami	Cloudy	78° / 74°	
New York	Partly Cloudy	42° / 37°	
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	52° / 40°	
Paris	Partly Cloudy	41° / 28°	
Busan	Sunny	37° / 18°	
Rome	Mostly Sunny	57° / 37°	
Salem	Rain	62° / 60°	
San Francisco	Sunny	57° / 46°	
Seoul	Sunny	22° / 6°	
Tokyo	Sunny	55° / 43°	
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	48° / 30°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
4:11 AM	High Tide	1.26	
9:24 AM	Low Tide	0.67	
3:35 PM	High Tide	1.82	
10:59 PM	Low Tide	-0.08	

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 20, 2023

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily	UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5	UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily	UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau	PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily	UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
				UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily	UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam	UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau	UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
				7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily	7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily	TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily	7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4, 7	OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

SAIPAN TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily


TINIAN TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

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COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS

P.O. Box 500830, Saipan MP 96950

Tel. No (670) 234-3751/52/52 • Website: www.dpl.gov.mp • Facebook: facebook.com/DPLCNMI



NOTICE OF PROPOSED LEASE OF PUBLIC LAND

In accordance with Section 106 (b) of Public Law 15-2, the Department of Public Lands hereby gives notice of its intent to lease certain public land in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Any interested parties of the general public may submit comments, data, views, or arguments of alternative proposals for the lease of the public land. As further provided by Public Law 15-2, the following pertinent information is required to be published.

i.

The proposed lease of public land is described as Lot 013 E 03, containing an area of approximately 10,630 square meters, situated in Lower Base, Saipan. A map showing the location of the parcel is available at the Department of Public Lands for inspection.

ii.

The prospective Lessee is The Pacific Line Corporation. The list of officers for The Pacific Line Corporation: Lee, Cun Ki, as President/ Treasurer and Eric Cruz, as Vice President and Jooyoon Delos Reyes, as Secretary.

iii.

The proposed lease is compliant with DPL regulations and was negotiated by the officers and directors of The Pacific Line Corporation, mainly by Eric Cruz and Jooyoon Delos Reyes.

iv.

The lessee shall use the premises solely for the purpose of a recycling center.

The term of the proposed lease agreement is 25 years.

The proposed annual rental during the term of the lease agreement is based on a percentage of the appraised fair market value of the property plus the applicable percentage of Business Gross Receipts in DPL's regulation.

v.

A copy of the proposed lease agreement may be obtained at the office of the Department of Public Lands, located on \ the 2nd floor of the Joeten Dandan Commercial Building in Dandan, Saipan; 1st floor of the De'Ana Commercial Building, Songsong Village, Rota; or the 1st floor of the PM Building, Tinian. A copy will also be available online at www.dpl.gov.mp

vi.

The Department of Public Lands has received no alternative proposals to lease the subject public land in Lower Base, Saipan.

vii.

The Secretary of the Department of Public Lands shall accept written comments, views, arguments or alternative proposals from interested parties on or before January 1, 2024, at the Department of Public Lands offices located in Saipan, Rota or Tinian.

NUTISIA PUT I MAPROPONI NA ATKILON TĀNU´ PUPBLIKU

Sigun gi Seksiona 106 (b) gi Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i Dipattamentun Tanu´ Pupbliku mannáná'i nutisia guini put i intension-niha para u ma'atkila metton na tanu' pupbliku giya Saipan, Commonwealth gi Sangkattan na Islas Mariánas. Maseha háyi na pattidá intrisao gi halum hinirát pupbliku siña muna'hálum upiñon, infotmasion, pat testimonium kinontra gi tinahguin prinoponi siha para i atkilon nu i tanu' pupbliku. Kumu mapribeni más mo'na ginin i Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i tinattitíyi pettanesi na infotmasion manisisita para u mapupblika.

i.

I maproponi na atkilon tanu' pupbliku madiskribi kumu Lot 013 E 03, ni kunsissiti kási 10,630 square meters, ni gaigi gi hálum Lower Base, Saipan. I mápa ni a'annuk i páttin i lugát managuaha gi ufisinan Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku para inspeksión.

ii.

I prospective lessee sa I Pacific Line Corporation. I listan nu ufisiát siha para I Pacific Line Corporation: si Lee, Cun Ki, komu Presidenti/Tresureru yan si Eric Cruz, komu Sigundu Presidenti yan si Jooyoon Delos Reyes, komu Sekritáriu.

iii.

I maproponi na atkilon ha tattíyi i regulasion DPL siha yan ginen manegosiu ni ufisiát yan direktot-niha I Pacific Line Corporation, mayotmenti ginen as Eric Cruz yan si Jooyoon Delos Reyes.

iv.

I lessee debi na u usa i lugát put atyu ha' na rason nu i recycling center.

I tema nu i maproponi na kuntrátan atkilon sa' bentisingku (25) áñus na tiempu.

I maproponi na atkilon gi kada' sákkan gi durántin teman kontrátan i` atkilon mapega gi put sientus nu i bálin "appraised fair market" i propiedát yan i aplikáo na put sientus nu i "Business Gross Receipts" gi halum i regulasion DPL.

v.

I kopian nu i maproponi na kuntrátan atkilon siña machulí' gi ufisinan i Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku ni gaigi gi sigundu (2nd) na bibiendan i Joeten Dandan Commercial Building iya Dandan, Saipan, primet (1st) na bibiendan i De'Ana Commercial Building, iya Songsong Village, Luta; pat i primet (1st) na bibiendani PM Building, giya Tinian. I kopia debi lokuu' na managuaha online gi www.dpl.gov.mp

vi.

I Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku táya marisibi ni háfa na tinahguin inofresi siha ni para u ma'atkila i suhetu na tanu' pupbliku gi Lower Base, Saipan.

vii.

I Sekritáriu Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku debi na u aksepta tinigi' upiñon, infotmasion, testimonium kinontra pat tinahguin prinoponi siha ginin i manintrisáo na pattida siha gi pat ántis di Ineru 1, 2024, gi ufisinan Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku siha ni gaigi giya Sa'ipan, Luta pat Tinian.

ARONGORONGOL PPWOMMWOL ATKILÓONOL FALÚW

Sángi Tálil 106 (b) reel Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap re isiisiwow arongorong igha re mángemángil rebwe atkilaay faluweer toulap Ilól Seipél, Commonwealth Téel Falúw kka Efáng Ilól Marianas. Schóo kka re tipáli sángi toulap emmwel rebwe isisilong ischil kkapas, data, views, ngare angingil ppwomm ikka aa siwel ngáli ppwommwol atkiloónol faluweer toulap. Re bwal ayoora sángi Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, arongorong ikka e ffil ebwe akkatéewow e amwirimwiritiw:

i.

Ppwommwol atkiloónol faluweer toulap e bwaá bwe Lot 013 E 03, e lo 10,630 reel square meters, iye e lo Lower Base, Seipél. E bwaálo wóol móopal falúw eyoor me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap reel ubwe amwuri.

ii.

Ppwommwol schóol atkiloón nge Pacific Line Corporation. List-al officers ngáli Pacific Line Corporation: Lee, Cun Ki, bwe president/Treasurer me Eric Cruz, bwe Vice President me Jooyoon Delos Reyes, bwe Sekkretóoriya.

iii.

Ppwommwol atkiloón e angúungú fengál me mwóghutughutúl DPL me e abwungubwung sángi officers me director-il Pacific Line Corporation, spesiatmente Eric Cruz me Jooyoon Delos Reyes.

iv.

Rebwe yaáli ppwommwol atkiloón ngáli leliyal recycling.

Ppwommwol abwungunwungúl atkiloón nge ruweigh me limoow ráagh.

Ppwommwol atkiloón ghal ráagh atol abwungubwungúl atkiloón yeel nge e lo reel percentage-il appraised fair market value reel falúw fengál me application percentage reel Gross Receipts Ilól mwóghutughutúl DPL.

v.



Pappidil ppwommwol abwungubwungúl atkiloón nge emmwel ubwe bweibwogh me reel Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap, iye e lo 2nd floor me Joeten Dandan Commercial Building me Dandan, Seipél; 1st floor reel De'Ana Commercial Building, Apilómwol Songsong, Luuta; ngare 1st floor me PM Building, Tchiliyól. Ebwal yoor pappid emmwel ubwe amwuri online me www.dpl.gov.mp


vi.

Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap rese bweibwogh siiwelil ppwommw reel atkiloónol faluweer toulap iye e lo Alal Ghaloowa, Seipél.

vii.

Sekkretóoriyal Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap re bweibwogh ischil kkapas, views, angingi ngare siiwelil ppwommw sángi schóo kka re mwuschel wóol ngare mmwalil Enero1, 2024, me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap iye e lo Seipél, Luuta ngare Tchiliyól.






COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS

P.O. Box 500830, Saipan MP 96950

Tel. No (670) 234-3751/52/52 • Website: www.dpl.gov.mp • Facebook: facebook.com/DPLCNMI



NOTICE OF PROPOSED LEASE OF PUBLIC LAND

In accordance with Section 106 (b) of Public Law 15-2, the Department of Public Lands hereby gives notice of its intent to lease certain public land in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Any interested party(ies) of the general public may submit comments, data, views, or arguments of alternative proposals for the proposed lease of the public land. As further provided by Public Law 15-2, the following pertinent information is required to be published:

i.

The proposed lease of public land is described as Lot 047 H 04, containing an area of approximately 1,383 square meters, situated in Chalan Kanoa, Saipan. A map showing the location of the parcel is available at the Department of Public Lands office located on the 2nd floor of the Joeten Dandan Commercial Building in Dandan, for inspection.

ii.

The prospective Lessee is Shining Star Inc. The list of officers for Shining Star Inc.: Mr. Ju, Weimin, as President, Mr. Zhao, Liang, as Vice President and Mr. Deng, Aihua as Secretary/Treasurer.

iii.

The proposed lease is compliant with DPL regulations and was negotiated by Shining Star, Inc's authorized local representative, Mr. Ralph Demapan.

iv.

The lessee shall use the premises solely for the purpose of a parking for the hotel establishment.

The term of the proposed lease agreement is 25 years.

The proposed annual rental during the term of the lease agreement is based on a percentage of the appraised fair market value of the property plus the applicable percentage of Business Gross Receipts in DPL's regulation.

v.

A copy of the proposed lease agreement may be obtained at the Department of Public Lands Offices:

• 2nd floor of the Joeten Dandan Commercial Building in Dandan, Saipan;

• 1st floor of the De'Ana Commercial Building, in Songsong Village, Rota; and

• 1st floor of the PM Building, Tinian.

A copy will also be available online at www.dpl.gov.mp

vi.

The Department of Public Lands has received no alternative proposals to lease the subject public land property in Chalan Kanoa, Saipan.

vii.

The Secretary of the Department of Public Lands shall accept written comments, views, arguments or alternative proposals from interested parties on or before January 1, 2024, at the Department of Public Lands offices located in Saipan, Rota or Tinian.

NUTISIA PUT I MAPROPONI NA ATKILON TĀNU´ PUPBLIKU

Sigun gi Seksiona 106 (b) gi Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i Dipattamentun Tanu´ Pupbliku mannáná'i nutisia guini put i intension-niha para u ma'atkila metton na tanu' pupbliku giya Saipan, Commonwealth gi Sangkattan na Islas Mariánas. Maseha háyi na pattidá intrisao gi halum hinirát pupbliku siña muna'hálum upiñon, infotmasion, pat testimonium kinontra gi tinahguin prinoponi siha para i atkilon nu i tanu' pupbliku. Kumu mapribeni más mo'na ginin i Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i tinattitíyi pettanesi na infotmasion manisisita para u mapupblika.

i.

I maproponi na atkilon tanu' pupbliku madiskribi kumu Lot 047 H 04, ni kunsissiti kási 1,383 square meters, ni gaigi gi hálum Chalan Kanoa, Saipan. I mápa ni a'annuk i páttin i lugát managuaha gi ufisinan Dipattamen tun Tanu' Pupbliku ni gaigi gi sigundu na bibienda gi Joeten Dandan Commercial Building gi halum Dandan, para inspeksión.

ii.

I prospective lessee sa i Shining Star, Inc. I listan nu ufisiát siha para i Shining Star, Inc: si Siñot Ju, Weimin, komu Presidenti, si Siñot Zhao, Liang, komu Sigundu Presidenti, yan si Siñot Deng, Aihua komu Sekritári u/Tresureru.

iii.

I maproponi na atkilon ha tattíyi i regulasion DPL siha yan ginen manegosiu ni as Shining Star, Inc's ma'aturisa na deligádun táotáo tánu', as Siñot Ralph Demapan.

iv.

I lessee debi na u usa i lugát put atyu ha' na rason nu i parking lot ni chechu yan i fondasión hotel-niha.

I tema nu i maproponi na kontrátan atkilon sa' bentisingku (25) áñus na tiempu.

I maproponi na atkilon gi kada' sákkan gi durántin teman kontrátan i` atkilon mapega gi put sientus nu i bálin "appraised fair market" i propiedát yan i aplikáo na put sientus nu i "Business Gross Receipts" gi halum i regulasion DPL.

v.

I kopian nu i maproponi na kuntrátan atkilon siña machulí' gi ufisinan i Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku siha:

• Sigundu na bibiendan i Joeten Dandan Commercial Building iya Dandan, Saipan;

• Primet (1st) na bibiendan i De'Ana Commercial Building, iya Songsong Village, Luta; yan

• Primet (1st) na bibiendan i PM Building, giya Tinian.

I kopia debi lokuu' na managuaha online gi www.dpl.gov.mp

vi.

I Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku táya marisibi ni háfa na tinahguin inofresi siha ni para u ma'atkila i suhetu na tanu' pupbliku gi Chalan Kanoa, Saipan.

vii.

I Sekritáriu Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku debi na u aksepta tinigi' upiñon, infotmasion, testimonium kinontra pat tinahguin prinoponi siha ginin i manintrisáo na pattida siha gi pat ántis di Ineru 1, 2024, gi ufisinan Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku siha ni gaigi giya Sa'ipan, Luta pat Tinian.

ARONGORONGOL PPWOMMWOL ATKILÓONOL FALÚW

Sángi Tálil 106 (b) reel Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap re isiisiwow arongorong igha re mángemángil rebwe atkilaay faluweer toulap Ilól Seipél, Commonwealth Téel Falúw kka Efáng Ilól Marianas. Schóo kka re tipáli sángi toulap emmwel rebwe isisilong ischil kkapas, data, views, ngare angingil ppwomm ikka aa siwel ngáli ppwommwol atkiloónol faluweer toulap. Re bwal ayoora sángi Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, arongorong ikka e ffil ebwe akkatéewow e amwirimwiritiw:

i.

Ppwommwol atkiloónol faluweer toulap e bwaá bwe Lot 047 H 04, e lo 1,383 reel square meters, iye e lo Alal Ghaloowa, Seipél. E bwaálo wóol móopal falúw eyoor me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap wóol 2nd floor me Joeten Dandan Commercial Building me Dandan, reel ubwe amwuri.

ii.

Ppwommwol schóol atkiloón nge Shining Star Inc. List-al officers ngáli Shining Star Inc.: Mr. Ju, Weimin, bwe president, Mr. Zhao, Liang, bwe Vice President me Mr. Deng, Aihua bwe Sekkretóoriyo/Treasurer.

iii.

Ppwommwol atkiloón e angúungú fengál me mwóghutughutúl DPL me e abwungubwung sángi Shining Star, Inc's local representative iye e yoor bwángil nge Mr. Ralph Demapan.

iv.

Schóol atkiloón ebwe yááyá falúw ngáli leliyal parking lot ngáli hotel.

Ppwommwol abwungubwungúl atkiloón nge fáaigh ráagh.

Ppwommwol atkiloón ghal ráagh atol abwungubwungúl atkiloón yeel nge e lo reel percentage of the appraised fair market value reel falúw fengál me application percentage of Gross Receipts Ilól mwóghutughutúl DPL.

v.

Pappidil ppwommwol abwungubwungúl atkiloón nge emmwel ubwe bweibwogh me reel Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap me:

• 2nd floor me Joeten Dandan Commercial Building me Dandan, Seipél;

• 1st floor me De'Ana Commercial Building, me Apilómwol Songsong, Luuta; me

• 1st floor me PM Building, Tchiliyól.

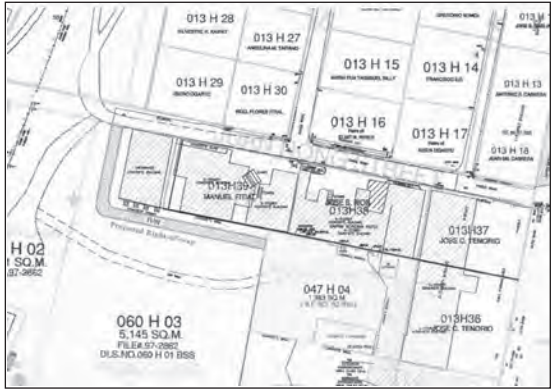

Ebwal yoor pappid emmwel ubwe amwuri online me www.dpl.gov.mp

vi.

Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap rese bweibwogh siiwelil ppwommw reel atkiloónol faluweer toulap iye e lo Alal Ghaloowa, Seipél.

vii.

Sekkretóoriyal Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap re bweibwogh ischil kkapas, views, angingi ngare siiwelil ppwommw sángi schóo kka re mwuschel wóol ngare mmwalil Enero 1, 2024, me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap iye e lo Seipél, Luuta ngare Tchiliyól.



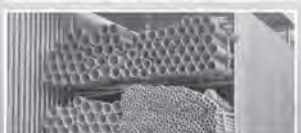


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Business

Christmas cake by Hyatt's newly appointed chef de cuisine

Jody O'Sullivan debuts as the new pastry chef at Hyatt Regency Saipan by making his first Christmas cake offering on Saipan. O'Sullivan joined the Hyatt family in November, and according to him, island life is really good.

"It is really familial here and, in the kitchen, it is a tight-knit community which is really enjoyable. There is a lot of chatting daily which makes it really easy to come to work... My team and I are working very engaged to further improve the quality of the pastry experiences here at the Hyatt. Some recipes have already changed and now we are working on refinement so that there is an elevated pleasure for our guests," he said.

"This year's cake offering is a Buche de Noel. It is a classic seasonal dessert that can be the centerpiece of your table because not only does it taste great but it also looks amazing. We are keeping the decoration simple yet classic. The Buche meant to resemble a log from the forest for the fire. There is moss, some toadstools and chocolate bark encasing a vanilla roll cake with Swiss chocolate, meringue, buttercream and a rich ganache on the outside," he explains.

For reasonable and attractive \$45, Buche de Noel is perfect to be shared as the final product finished off with even more chocolate.

Buche de Noel is available at Hyatt's DJ Corner and can be

ordered at least 72 hours prior to pick-up. It is a unique gift or part of your Yuletide menu in festivities with family or friends.

"I am Irish and I grew up in Limerick, a small city in south-west Ireland which dates back over 1,000 years. I had always been interested in the culinary arts and I told my kindergarten teacher that I wanted to be a chef when I grew up. As a teenager, I had done some work in some kitchens but took a different career path. The passion remains as I still loved baking, so I decided to leave my accounting job and fulfill my dream by becoming a pastry chef. I have not looked back," he said.

O'Sullivan trained in France as a pastry chef then moved



ALLY HONG
Hyatt Regency Saipan pastry chef Jody Sullivan describes Christmas cake Buche de Noel as "not only does it taste great, but it also looks amazing."

to London where he acquired work experiences with a selection of Michelin-starred chefs. He moved back to Ireland to work in a 5-star hotel in Ireland before starting his own macaron business that developed into a café and eventually got married. In 2016, he and his wife moved to Puebla, Mexico where he taught at Instituto Culinario de México for two and a half years. In 2018, O'Sullivan was part of the Mexico team at the culinary world cup. In 2019, he uprooted his family to move to the United States where he taught at Cambridge School of Culinary Arts and Bunker Hill Community College until September 2023.

O'Sullivan's passion for baking was greatly influenced by his grandmother. "She was a Home Economics teacher and she passed on some incredible baking skills to my mother, so I grew up eating really good cakes, desserts and Irish soda breads. My mum makes the

best sponge cake I have ever had. The passion grew naturally," he said.

"One of my favorite sayings: 'if you are standing still, you are moving backwards' and I think that is very important to keep in mind when we are creating new ideas," he added.

According to O'Sullivan, 2024 will be an exciting year for the cake offerings at Hyatt Regency Saipan.

Our target is to modernize and update the cake variety—both for celebration cakes and also for weddings. We will be working to offer a more tailored repertoire to our guests, with more updated finishes available. I am confident, with the ability that our pastry team has that all guests will be impressed by what is to come, he said.

"My team and I are very much looking forward to seeing you throughout the holiday season here at the Hyatt," he added. (Hyatt)



COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



INVITATION FOR BIDS CUC-IFB-24-003

Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement in Tinian, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists of the installation of a waterline main, service laterals, connection to the existing waterline main, and the installation of fire hydrants.

The project is funded by a grant from the US Department of Interior/Office of Insular Affairs (US DOI/OIA) and CUC. The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from US DOI/OIA.

CUC requires the project to be completed in **210 calendar days** from the date of award of the contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$200.00 for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **December 12, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No. 17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-24-003, Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 27, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before the due date and time or post-marked before the due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of **fifteen percent (15%)** of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A **Payment Bond** of one hundred (100%) percent and a **Performance Bond** of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 14, 2023** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Procurement & Supply Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org, with a copy to Larry Manacop, Acting Chief Engineer via email at larry.manacop@cucgov.org, Joel Puyat, Engineer via email at joel.puyat@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician via email address at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

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REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING DESIGN AND PLANNING SERVICES

CHARLIE DOCK EXTENSION PROJECT PORT OF SAIPAN PROJECT NO. CPA-SS-001-24

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested Consultants for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Design and Planning Services for the Charlie Dock Extension Project at the Port of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Project No. CPA-SS-001-24.

The project is being funded by the U.S. Maritime Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com or Ms. Sheri Llagas at receptionist@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for qualification statements must be submitted to Ms. Prater, CPA's Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, Friday, January 12, 2024.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2024**. Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Date: December 20, 2023

Life & Style

The Emmy Awards: A guide to how to watch, who you'll see, and why it all has taken so long

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The 2023 Emmy Awards will be held in 2024. Hollywood's two strikes meant a four-month delay for television's annual celebration of itself. But both have now been resolved and the show will go on. Here's a look at the telecast, the ceremony, and the series and stars up for awards.

WHEN ARE THE EMMY AWARDS?

The 75th Primetime Emmy Awards will be held on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, Monday night, Jan. 15, at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles. Anthony Anderson will host. It will be telecast live on the Fox network starting at 8 p.m. Eastern, and available to stream the following day on Hulu.

Fox is taking its turn this year in an annual rotation between the four networks. Anderson, who was nominated for lead actor in a comedy



AP
An Emmy statue is displayed Saturday, Sept. 11, 2021, in Los Angeles.

seven times for his work on ABC's "black-ish," is a first-time Emmys host, although he's hosted the NAACP Image Awards eight times.

He'll also have a fresh connection to Fox by the time he takes the Emmys stage—his

new show "We Are Family" is set to debut in early January.

No presenters have yet been announced.

Now with a TV-themed name, downtown LA's Peacock Theater, formerly the Microsoft Theater and the

Nokia Theatre, has been the go-to home for the Emmys since 2008.

EMMY NOMINEES

As is typical at the Emmys, HBO shows dominated the nominations when they were

announced way back in July. The top three nominees were all from the gilded cable channel.

"Succession" is the leading nominee, getting 27 for its fourth and final season, including best drama, an award it has won at two of the past three Emmys. Brian Cox, Jeremy Strong and Kieran Culkin are all up for best actor in a drama. Four more men from the show are up for best supporting actor. And Sarah Snook got a best actress nomination.

HBO's "The Last of Us" got 24 nominations, including best drama, best actor for Pedro Pascal and best actress for Bella Ramsey.

"The White Lotus," yes, also from HBO, got 23 noms

for its second season. Jennifer Coolidge and Aubrey Plaza are among the whopping five nominees from the show in the single category of best supporting actress.

"Ted Lasso" was tops among comedies with 21 nominations, including best comedy series, and best actor for Jason Sudeikis. The Apple TV+ series won both awards for each of its first two seasons.

WHY WERE THE AWARDS POSTPONED?

Hollywood's historic work stoppage among writers and actors, both essential to the Emmys, meant the show had a rare delay for an unprecedented four months.

NY sues SiriusXM, accuses it of deliberately making it difficult to cancel subscriptions

NEW YORK (AP)—New York's attorney general filed suit Wednesday against SiriusXM, accusing the satellite radio and streaming service of making it intentionally difficult for its customers to cancel their subscriptions.

Attorney General Letitia James' office said an investigation into complaints from customers found that SiriusXM forced subscribers to wait in an automated system before often lengthy interactions with agents who were trained in ways to avoid accepting a request to cancel service.

"Having to endure a lengthy and frustrating process to cancel a subscription is a stressful burden no one looks forward to, and when companies make it hard to cancel subscriptions, it's illegal," the attorney general said in a statement.



AP
New York Attorney General Letitia James speaks to the media, Nov. 6, 2023, in New York.

The company disputed the claims, arguing that many of the lengthy interaction times cited in the lawsuit were based on a 2020 inquiry and were caused in part by the effects of the pandemic on their operations. The company said many of its plans can be canceled with a simple click of a button online.

Ryan Gosling reimagines his 'Barbie' power ballad 'I'm Just Ken' for Christmas, shares new EP

NEW YORK (AP)—She's Barbie. He's just Ken. And now, it's Christmas.

On Wednesday, Ryan Gosling—the Ken to Margot Robbie's "Barbie" in the film—released the "I'm Just Ken" EP alongside collaborators Mark Ronson and Andrew Wyatt. It features the original Grammy-nominated, '80s-style power ballad from the movie, also titled "I'm Just Ken," as well as three remixes: the stripped down "I'm Just Ken (In My Feelings Acoustic)," the dance floor ready "I'm Just Ken (Purple Disco Machine Remix)," and the festive "I'm Just Ken (Merry Kristmas Barbie)." The later was released with

an official music video, where Gosling, Wyatt and Ronson are seen working on the holiday remix of the song in a studio drenched in Christmas lights with an impressive live band, bantering with one another. At one point, a goofy Gosling puts on a pair of sunglasses to get into character, telling Ronson he's doing so because "the world can have Ken's voice but only Barbie can have his eyes."

The trio are joined by a full band as well by two cellists, four violinists and a glockenspiel. Gosling's vocals are run through reverb—adding to the triumphant and whimsical reimagining. "Merry Christmas,



AP
Ryan Gosling poses for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the "Barbie" movie, July 12, 2023, in London.

Barbie," he ends the song. "Wherever you are."

In July, Ronson, who worked as the executive producer of the "Barbie" soundtrack and also scored it alongside Wyatt, told the Associated Press he typi-

cally only contributes music to songs for film—but in the case of "I'm Just Ken," couldn't shake a few lyrics that made the final cut, like its memorable chorus of "I'm just Ken, anywhere else I'd be a 10."

Husband views wife's texts with co-worker as a threat

DEAR ABBY: I am a 42-year-old male, married for 19 years with three teenage children. My wife recently decided to return to work after staying home with the kids as a full-time mom. She's an elementary school teacher and has a male co-worker.

For six months, this co-worker has been texting her constantly, sometimes every day for several weeks at a time. Along with work-related texts, he asks for advice regarding his recent breakup with a longtime girlfriend. He has also been sending random texts late at night asking how she's doing, and "checking in" messages.

Two weeks into summer break, he messaged her asking her how her summer was and telling her what's going on in his life. I have confronted her about the borderline inappropriate texts he sends, and she assures me nothing is going on between them. She says she's "handling" it by not responding to his texts but will not tell him to quit texting her.

I have never met this guy, but feel I need to have a conversation with him explaining my concerns. Emotional affairs are real, especially in a workplace. Even though I trust her, I don't trust him, and I feel disrespected. I understand they work together and need to communicate, but this feels wrong. Any advice would be appreciated.

EXCESSIVE IN MICHIGAN

DEAR EXCESSIVE: I urge you to forget about confronting your wife's co-worker. Try this instead: Tell your wife you want to meet and get to know this co-worker and suggest the three of you (or four, if he would like to bring a date) meet for a casual lunch or dinner. If you do, it will give you insight into what is going on. He may be quite a bit younger, trying to be friendly and asking for dating advice because he thinks of her as a mentor. I do NOT think this has anything to do with respect or lack of respect for you.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: The few times I have been able to visit some dear extended family, the hosts have left me elsewhere for most of the day. During my last visit, the husband and wife left me with in-laws, nieces and nephews for 12 hours at a time while they worked. They didn't mention this as we arranged the visit.

I wouldn't have visited if I had known they would leave me to go do something more important. While I adore my young nephews and nieces, I prefer to visit the folks who actually invited me. What can I do?

LEFT IN LOUISIANA

DEAR LEFT: I am wondering whether these relatives invited you to visit, or if you invited yourself. If it's the former, tell

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren

UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



them that if you had realized they'd be so scarce, you wouldn't have come. If your relatives' schedules are so full that they can't reserve time to be with you, consider renting a car so you won't be so dependent on them for transportation. Either that, or cut your visit short because you aren't enjoying it.

■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

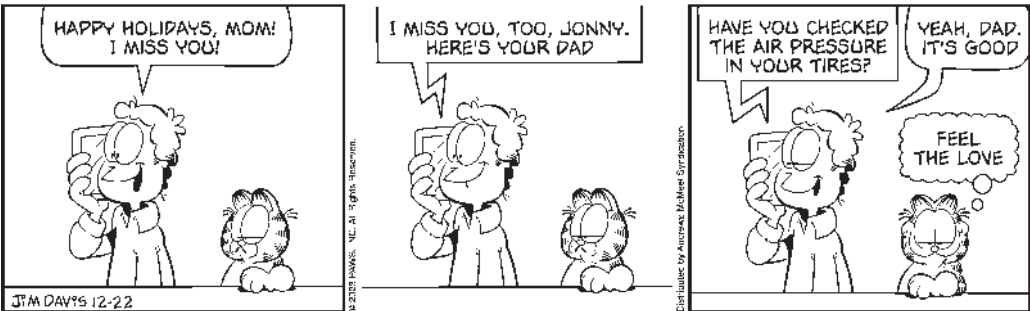
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



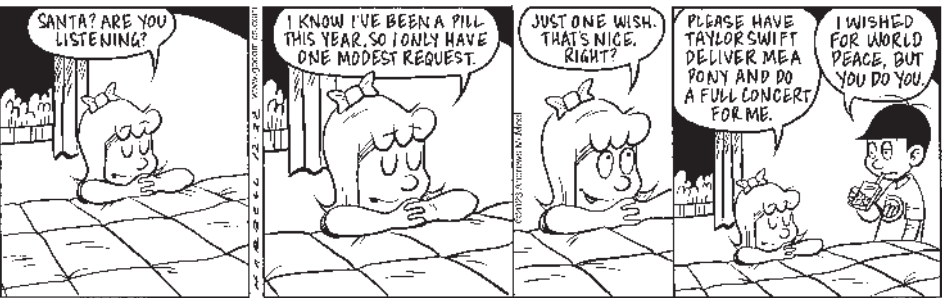
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 "Xanadu" band

4 Wine region

8 Beach crawler

12 Soda

13 Avocado dip, for short

14 Tex. neighbor

15 Winter race vessel

17 Optimistic

18 Newspaper piece

19 Favorite pal, in texts

21 Spring month

22 "The Da Vinci Code" setting

26 Hilton heiress

29 U-boat, for one

30 — Lingus

31 Singer Celine

32 Anger

33 Coagulate

34 Rx overseer

35 Here, to Henri

36 Gaggle members

37 "No Exit" writer

39 Chum

40 Knock

41 Spots in the ocean

45 Heavy reading?

48 Place for cold storage

50 Pub orders

51 Just adorable

52 — Dawn Chong

53 Signature pieces?

54 Jailer's janglers

55 Mork's planet

DOWN

1 Monumental

2 Crazy

3 Autobahn

4 Tropical lizards

5 Optimistic

6 Eastern "way"

7 Cool shade

8 Ionian island

9 "King Kong" studio

10 Gore and Pacino

11 Howl at the moon

16 Curry spice

20 Watch chain

23 Low-lying region

24 Antique cars

25 Art Deco master

26 Shareable PC files

27 Verdi heroine

28 Katy Perry hit song

29 Hindu honorific

32 Chipping tool

33 Yo-Yo Ma's instrument

35 Lyricist Gershwin

36 Deep cuts

38 Lock of hair

39 Devoutness

42 Modern money

43 Russian ruler

44 Hunt for

45 Spigot

46 World Cup cheer

47 Gents

49 Maestro's signal

Solution time: 25 mins.

Yesterdays answer 12-22

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jordin Sparks, 34; Brooke Nevin, 41; Ralph Fiennes, 61; Diane Sawyer, 78.

Happy Birthday: Your verbal abilities are skyrocketing. It's time to negotiate and put things in place that will improve your life. Consider what makes you happy, and implement changes to help you reach your goal. Don't waste time procrastinating when there is work to do if you plan to get your life heading in a direction that surpasses your expectations. Your numbers are 5, 12, 22, 27, 33, 42, 45.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Set a pace and keep going until you are satisfied with your achievements. Don't expect to get much help or to please everyone. Make a point to take care of your needs and give yourself a pat on the back for what you accomplish. ***

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Take notes, make a list and get organized, and everything else will fall into place. You can improve a meaningful relationship by supporting that person and helping them get where they want to go. Love and romance are in the stars. ***

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Refuse to give in and break your budget. Don't entertain shopping at places you cannot afford or trying to take on more than you can handle to try and impress someone. If you use your imagination, you'll devise a cost-efficient plan. ***

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Call on those you know you can count on when you're in a tight spot, and something good will transpire. An emotional plea combined with enthusiasm and a genius idea will solidify your plans and give you the gumption to

finish what you start. ****

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Be careful; something that sounds too good to be true probably lacks substance. Don't entertain something with a dollar figure greater than your budget. You can't buy love, but your actions and words of gratitude can make a difference to someone special. **

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Spread your wings and fly. Making travel plans, visiting old friends or jetting about looking for something special for someone you love will spice up your life. Embrace the spirit of the season, and you'll come up with ideas that lead to positive change. *****

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Let your actions speak for you. Refuse to let anyone take advantage of you or talk you into something you don't want. Stay active and reach out to those who enjoy the same things you do, and you'll feel at ease. Don't make impromptu purchases. ***

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Find ways to improve your life. It's up to you to lead the way and to build enthusiasm in others to ensure you get the backup you need to reach your destination. Opportunity is within reach; it's up to you to make it happen. ***

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Take time to find out what others like and how you can do something thoughtful for loved ones this festive season. What you do for others will far exceed anything you can purchase. Give the greatest gifts of all this year: time and love. ***

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Aim to please yourself. Comfort, convenience and love are the roads to contentment. Think creatively to come up with a plan that is cost-efficient and excites you. A change to your living area or workspace will have a positive effect. Romance is favored. *****

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Emotional matters will escalate with the stress of a busy schedule or trying to please too many at the expense of your health and financial well-being. Pick yourself up and put a plan in place that is cost-efficient and stress-free. **

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): A creative and disciplined attitude will get you through the day. Handle money matters with care and refrain from making shortsighted purchases. Put your energy into humanitarian causes that bring joy to others and make you feel good about yourself. Romance is favored. ****

Birthday Baby: You are insightful, practical and ambitious. You are persistent and imaginative.

☾: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ☼: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ☼☼: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ☼☼☼: Aim high; start new projects. ☼☼☼☼: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

	3			5		4		2
5		4	8			9		
9	8		6			1	3	5
		6		4		7		9
			2	9		6	1	8
					6			3
				1				
		3	4	6			9	
1			7	2	3			4

Difficulty: ★★★

12/21

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterdays Answer

8								5
	4	3		5	2		1	
			1	7	4			
2		9		6			9	7
7		5				8	3	4
	2		9	4			5	
	9	4			8	3		
			2					

Difficulty: ****

12/22

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them. Circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

FISHING BAIT

Solution: 8 letters

S O F T T I A B R E N N I P S
C S C E A A C R A Y F I S H V
M H M E L C P M I R H S S E W
T R I R P B K N I S S R G R E
D C O C O O B L H R E E S O I
O S S W K W R O E L T P G M G
U R K I G E L D W A I P N O H
G E O N V A N A B K U O I N T
H T O O B A R L E E R H M E S
B S H A M C E E S M F S M S W
A A R A T S V S R G L S I F O
L C L H E I G S L U O A R L N
L A G V D S G U B E L R T I N
S I I H O M E M A D E G F E I
N L D I U Q S E N I D R A S M

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Bugs, Casters, Chicken, Crab, Crayfish, Dive, Dough Balls, Eels, Flies, Frogs, Fruit, Grasshoppers, Homemade, Hooks, Hover, Lake, Live, Lure, Meal Worms, Metal, Minnows, Mussel, Night Crawlers, Pheromones, Rag Worm, Rope, Salamanders, Sardines, Shrimp, Sink, Soft, Spinner Bait, Squid, Tackle, Trimmings, Vegetables, Weights, Wobble
Yesterdays Answer: Gift Cards
The NEW TELEWORD VINTAGE COLLECTION #1 can be purchased on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367.)

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99c per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

Brown, White lead Celtics over the Kings, 144-119



SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Jaylen Brown and Derrick White each scored 28 points to help the short-handed Boston Celtics bounce back from a disappointing loss at Golden State with a 144-119 victory over the Sacramento Kings on Wednesday night.

Boston blew a 17-point lead before losing to the Warriors in overtime Tuesday night and played without leading scorer Jayson Tatum (ankle) and big man Al Horford (rest) against the Kings.

But the Celtics looked like the far fresher team and rolled to their sixth win in seven games.

Kristaps Porzingis, who missed the game against Golden State because of a calf injury, dominated the interior for Boston with 24 points, nine rebounds and six blocked shots.

De'Aaron Fox scored 29 points on his 26th birthday to lead the Kings, who had won three straight games.

76ERS 127, TIMBERWOLVES 113

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Joel Embiid scored a season-high 51 points and grabbed 12 rebounds, and the 76ers used a big fourth quarter to close out the Timberwolves.

Tyrese Maxey scored 35 points as Philadelphia (19-8) won for the seventh time in eight games, bouncing back nicely after a 108-104 loss to Chicago on Monday night.

Minnesota (20-6) got 27 points from Anthony Edwards, 23 points from Karl-Anthony Towns and 21 from Jaden McDaniels. The Timberwolves entered Wednes-



Sacramento Kings forward Keegan Murray, left, guards Boston Celtics guard Jaylen Brown (7) during the first quarter of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif., Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023.

day night as winners of nine of its last 10 games and possessors of the league's best record.

Embiid recorded his 12th straight game with 30 or more points and 10-plus rebounds. It is the NBA's longest such streak since Kareem Abdul-Jabbar did it in 16 straight games for the Milwaukee Bucks in the 1971-72 season.

CLIPPERS 120, MAVERICKS 111

DALLAS (AP)—Kawhi Leonard scored 30 points, and the Clippers held on for their ninth consecutive victory.

Norman Powell scored 21 points off the bench with Paul George sidelined by an illness, and James Harden had 17 points and 11 assists. The Clippers are on their longest winning streak since a 10-game run in 2015-16.

Dallas star Luka Doncic's franchise record of 11 con-

secutive games with at least 30 points ended with 28 in a sixth straight game without All-Star guard Kyrie Irving, who has a bruised right heel.

Doncic recorded his sixth triple-double by getting 10 rebounds and 10 assists.

KNICKS 121, NETS 102

NEW YORK (AP)—Julius Randle scored 26 points, Donte DiVincenzo added 23 and the Knicks beat the Nets for their first victory in Brooklyn in four years.

Immanuel Quickley had 19 points and Jalen Brunson finished with 16 points, eight assists and seven rebounds for the Knicks, who have swung New York's NBA basketball rivalry back in their favor with Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving no longer in town. The Knicks have won all three meetings since the Nets traded the two stars last season, after never beating the Nets

when they were on the floor.

Now the Knicks have ended a six-game losing streak at Barclays Center, where they hadn't won since Dec. 26, 2019.

Cam Thomas and Cam Johnson each scored 20 points for the Nets, who lost their fourth straight.

PACERS 144, HORNETS 113

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Buddy Hield scored 25 points, helping Indiana stop a four-game losing streak.

Tyrese Haliburton had 19 points and 13 assists for the Pacers, who shot 61.3% from the field. Aaron Nesmith scored 19 points, and Myles Turner had 18.

Terry Rozier had 25 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for Charlotte, and rookie Brandon Miller added 21 points and six rebounds.

Playing without start-

ing point guard LaMelo Ball (sprained right ankle) and center Mark Williams (back contusion, the Hornets dropped their sixth in a row to fall to 7-19.

BULLS 124, LAKERS 108

CHICAGO (AP)—DeMar DeRozan had 27 points, nine assists and seven rebounds, and the Bulls beat LeBron James and the Lakers.

Chicago shot 54.5% from the field and had eight players score in double figures. Coby White had 17 points and reserve Ayo Dosunmu added 14.

Despite the continued absence of All-Star guard Zach LaVine due to right foot inflammation, the Bulls opened a six-game homestand with their third win in four games.

James had 25 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists for Los Angeles, falling just shy of a second consecutive triple-double. Anthony Davis had 19 points and 14 rebounds in his hometown.

The Lakers have dropped four of five since winning the NBA In-Season Tournament.

NUGGETS 113, RAPTORS 104

TORONTO (AP)—Nikola Jokic had 31 points and 15 rebounds, and Denver won for the fifth time in six games.

Jamal Murray scored 20 points for the Nuggets, who evened their road record at 8-8. Aaron Gordon and Michael Porter Jr. each scored 12 points.

Jokic shot 13 for 23 and led the Nuggets with six assists, including a behind-the-back dish to Gordon in the first quarter.

Scottie Barnes had 30 points and 10 rebounds for

Toronto. Pascal Siakam added 18 points.

CAVALIERS 124, JAZZ 116

CLEVELAND (AP)—Sam Merrill set career highs with 27 points and eight 3-pointers, sending short-handed Cleveland to the victory.

Merrill buried three 3-pointers during a 17-2 run to open the fourth quarter, giving Cleveland its largest lead at 109-95. The reserve guard finished 9 of 16 from the field, including 8 of 14 beyond the arc, in a career-best 30 minutes.

Caris LeVert had 23 points for Cleveland, which made 23 3-pointers on a franchise-record 51 attempts.

Cavaliers guard Donovan Mitchell missed the game against his former team with an illness.

Lauri Markkanen had 26 points and 10 rebounds for Utah. Collin Sexton scored 20 points, and Talen Horton-Tucker had 19 points and tied his career high with 11 assists.

HEAT 115, MAGIC 106

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Tyler Herro had 28 points, eight rebounds and seven assists, helping Miami to the road win.

Bam Adebayo added 18 points and seven rebounds as Miami won for the fourth time in six games. Haywood Highsmith made four of the Heat's 15 3-pointers and finished with a season-high 15 points.

Miami played without Jimmy Butler, who has a strained left calf, and Kevin Love, who is out with an illness.

Cole Anthony led the Magic with 20 points. Franz Wagner added 15 points, and Paolo Banchero had 10 points on 2-of-12 shooting to go along with eight rebounds and eight assists.

Orlando center Wendell Carter Jr. returned to the lineup after missing 20 games with a fractured left hand. He played 23 minutes, finishing with eight points and six rebounds.

HAWKS 134, ROCKETS 127

HOUSTON (AP)—Trae Young had 30 points and 14 assists, and Atlanta held off a late charge by Houston.

It was Young's fifth straight game with at least 30 points and 10 assists, the longest such streak of his career.

Houston used a 14-0 run to close to 127-123 with about 90 seconds to go. Atlanta's Saddiq Bey made a big 3-pointer with 35 seconds left, and the Hawks held on for the win.

Jabari Smith Jr. led the Rockets with a career-high 34 points and also grabbed 13 rebounds. Fred VanVleet had a season-high 32 points with 15 assists.

Morant lawsuit provides glimpse into his youth, family, contentious pickup game

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—A pickup basketball game at Ja Morant's parents' home near Memphis two summers ago quickly turned a day of fun, food, family and friends into chaos.

Under the hot July sun, the trash-talking escalated between the Memphis Grizzlies star and a local high school player who was friends with Morant's sister and had been guarding him that day, according to witnesses.

During a check-ball sequence to start a game, Joshua Holloway hurled a hard pass from in close that hit Morant in the face, leading Morant to punch the 17-year-old in the chin. Morant's childhood friend Davonte Pack then punched him again, knocking him to the ground, witnesses said. As Holloway was being escorted away, he said he was going to "light up" the place like "fireworks," according to people

who were there.

On Wednesday, lawyers for Morant, 24, and Holloway, now 18, will return to court for a pretrial hearing in a lawsuit the teen filed against the mercurial player. Morant, who was not charged in the Holloway incident, is set to return Tuesday from a 25-game suspension that was levied against him last summer after he flashed a gun in two livestreamed videos. Pack, who was charged with misdemeanor assault before the charge was dropped, is also a defendant in the lawsuit, which seeks damages.

The civil case has provided an intimate look at Morant's life growing up in a small South Carolina town and the relationships he has built in his five years in Memphis, where he's toed the line between local hero and heavily scrutinized public figure. Court proceedings also have featured re-enactments by

lawyers and witnesses of the confrontation, including basketball passes and simulated punches between Morant and Holloway's lawyer.

The hearing Wednesday is based on Morant's motion to dismiss the case because he says he was acting in self-defense under the state's so-called stand your ground law, which allows people who feel threatened at their homes to use force in certain situations. The law is used in criminal cases, but Circuit Court Judge Carol Chumney's ruling last month cleared the way for Morant's lawyers to try to apply it in the civil case.

Morant's family has been hosting pickup games since he was a kid growing up in Dalzell, South Carolina. Morant's father, Tee, and mother, Jamie, would invite kids to play at their court, with Tee cooking postgame meals for

everyone. Jamie Morant testified that the games provided a safe haven that kept young people off the streets.

Morant struggled to catch the eye of top college basketball programs, but he eventually caught on with Murray State, which he led to the second round of the NCAA Tournament before the Grizzlies drafted him second overall in 2019.

During opening statements, Morant's lawyer Will Perry challenged Holloway's credibility and cast the teen as the instigator.

Holloway's lawyer Rebecca Adelman, meanwhile, framed Morant as a "hero-worshipped" NBA superstar who suffers from a lack of self-control and receives special treatment because of his talent and fame. Referring to the NBA player's support network as a "fix-it team" and "Team Morant," Adelman

said her client "lacks the influence and the affluence of this entire team."

Holloway was a friend of Morant's sister Teniya, who plays basketball at Mississippi Valley State University. She told the court that she first invited Holloway to play at her family's home and that he gained the family's trust through his respectful behavior, but that she now feels betrayed by him.

Holloway, who now plays at Samford University, attended one day of the hearing and has not testified.

Tee Morant testified that on the day of the altercation, he was urging Holloway to "go at Ja" on the court and that Holloway grew frustrated as the day wore on.

Holloway "was pissed," said Trey Draper, a basketball coach and former University of Memphis player who participated in some of the pickup games.

Rams, Saints roll into Thursday night showdown with playoff spots in sight



INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP)—The short week of rest and recovery for a Thursday night game is never a welcome sight on the schedule for NFL teams.

Getting that assignment in Week 16 is particularly unpleasant for beat-up players and sleep-deprived coaches—and even more daunting when the matchup carries significant playoff implications.

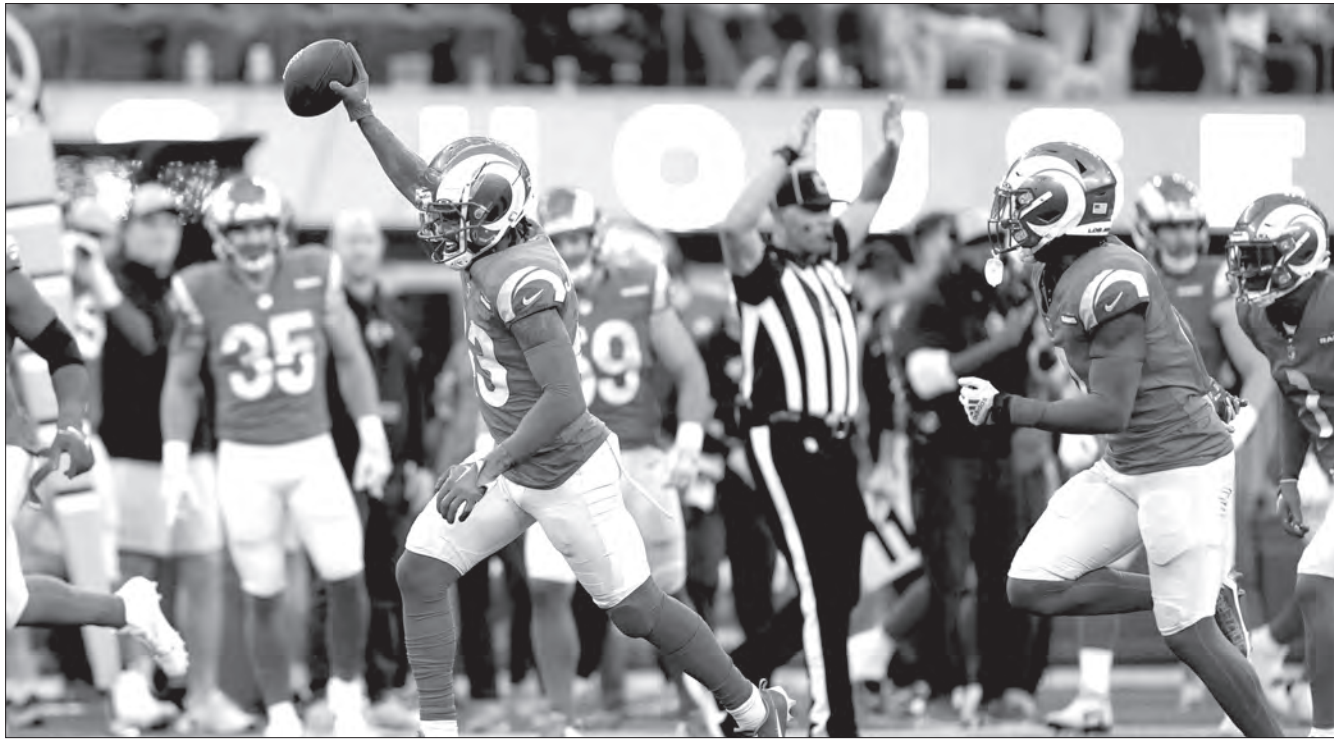
Yet the Los Angeles Rams and the New Orleans Saints have reasons to be positive about the timing of their compelling matchup at SoFi Stadium.

The Rams (7-7) have won four of five while playing their best football in two years, and they would like to keep their momentum going.

“Feels good to actually be playing at what we’re capable of,” Rams linebacker Ernest Jones said. “Early on, we let a lot of games slip, so it’s good to be rolling again. We can’t wait to show everyone that this young team, we’re still going to fight.”

The Saints (7-7) are also on a roll with two straight dominant wins, including a 24-6 thrashing of the Giants last Sunday. They also know they’ll also return home from this quick trip to the West Coast with extra time for healing and preparation for two games that could be even more important.

“After a good game that we



Los Angeles Rams safety John Johnson III, left, celebrates after intercepting a pass intended for Washington Commanders wide receiver Terry McLaurin during the second half of an NFL football game against the Washington Commanders Sunday, Dec. 17, 2023, in Los Angeles.

had as a team ... you want to get back out there because you feel good,” Saints quarterback Derek Carr said. “Really, it’s in the mindset, as I’ve learned over my 10 years. You’ve got to set your mind for Thursdays. They’re going to happen whether you want them to or not, and you’ve got to bring the energy and the effort to have a good day.”

Even a few weeks ago, the Saints visiting the Rams didn’t look like a matchup worthy of prime time, since both teams had struggled to stay above

.500 and in playoff contention this season.

But both teams have played their way into the thick of the NFC postseason race since then, setting up a compelling contrast of styles and strengths.

Sean McVay’s offense has moved up to eighth in the league with a series of strong performances led by Matthew Stafford, who is on a roll with 12 TD passes and one interception in the past four games.

“I think they’ve got a lot of guys that have played in a lot of big-time games,” McVay said

of the Saints. “This is a team that knows how to play winning football in the month of December, so we’ve got a great challenge.”

New Orleans will counter with its excellent secondary leading a defense that hasn’t allowed a touchdown in two straight games.

This game is important to the first-place Saints, but they finish the season with two NFC South matchups, including a showdown on New Year’s Eve with division co-leader Tampa Bay.

“At this point we still have

our destiny in our hands,” Saints defensive end Cameron Jordan said. “We don’t have to rely on anybody except us to try and get a playoff berth. ... The moment we falter is the moment we give somebody else our fate, and I’ve been there before, probably the last two seasons. That’s not what I’m looking for.”

RECENT RIVALRY

The Saints and Rams have split two meetings since Los Angeles’ overtime win in New Orleans in the NFC championship game in January 2019

—and neither game was good for quarterbacks.

Drew Brees broke his hand in the Saints’ loss in Los Angeles in September 2019 and missed the next five games, although it didn’t stop New Orleans from going 13-3 that season.

Stafford then played his final game of last season in the Rams’ 27-20 loss in New Orleans last November, leaving early with a possible concussion and eventually being ruled out for the season with a bruised spinal cord.

VETERAN LEADERSHIP

Last week, the Saints’ coaching staff strategically placed gas cans in the locker stalls of some key veteran players. The unspoken question was: How much gas do you have in the tank for a crucial late-season stretch?

“We kind of challenged older veteran players to step up and be at their best when their best is needed,” Saints coach Dennis Allen said.

Saints middle linebacker Demario Davis, now in his 12th NFL season, responded with a 10-tackle game highlighted by a sack and two tackles for loss against New York. Jordan played through ankle soreness and helped the Saints limit the Giants to just 60 yards rushing.

“It feels like it’s time for older guys to corral the team in terms of just sideline, in terms of energy, in terms of leading the charge,” Jordan said.

CARR’S GHOSTS

The previous time Carr visited SoFi Stadium, the California native and his Las Vegas Raiders got their hearts ripped out by Baker Mayfield and the Rams, who scored two late touchdowns in an electrifying 17-16 victory last December. Carr passed for just 137 yards in one of the least productive games of his 10-year career.

GRATIFYING REUNION

Saints tight end Jimmy Graham’s return to the NFL after one season out of football, and with the team that drafted him, didn’t always resemble a successful comeback story this season.

Although he caught a touchdown pass in Week 3, he had just two passes thrown to him—the other falling incomplete—during his first seven games. He was then inactive for four games before returning to the lineup three games ago.

He has five catches in those three games—three for touchdowns and the other two for first downs. What’s more, the Saints have scored nine TDs in 10 red zone opportunities in that stretch.

“Just his presence alone” makes a difference, Carr said. “As soon as he’s out there on the field, everyone’s antenna is up. And that’s good for us as a team.”

NFL players face pressure as never before, in digital-age surge of betting and fantasy

EAGAN, Minn. (AP)—Alexander Mattison and the Minnesota Vikings had boarded the flight home after a tough loss earlier this season, when the fifth-year running back found dozens of hateful and racist messages directed toward him on social media.

Criticism for the fumble he lost or his lack of rushing yards in the game? Fine. That comes with the job. But the trolling that night was so egregious that Mattison, after conferring with a trusted friend and fellow Black teammate, decided to push back and share some screen shots.

“Under my helmet, I am a human, a father, a son,” Mattison posted on Instagram in his lament and challenge to the 60-plus users to reflect on their words and the harm they can inflict. “This is sick.”

The intensity of NFL fandom that increased with the surge of fantasy football participation around the turn of the century has spiked further in the age of online betting.

“When you used to lose, you would hear about it because of a fan’s loyalty to the team. They want to win. Now you hear about it because they’re losing their money because of you,” Detroit Lions quarterback Jared Goff said.

The accessibility of social media has put players in position to feel that ferocity as never before, and that’s one reason why the league has a wellness program for these uniquely high-profile employees.

“We’ve come to a place in society, unfortunately, where we think it’s acceptable to dehumanize people. I think that veil of anonymity online creates that culture or that belief that it’s OK to go after people with impunity, but I think that we have to consider the impact on athletes,” said Dr. Brownell Mack, the team clinician for the Vikings. “We see them in armor. They wear the helmets and the padding, and we think that they’re somehow invincible or don’t have feelings.”

The contrast between those ups and downs in public approval rating can be particularly jarring.

“I was a Walter Payton Man of the Year nominee. I’d like to think of myself as a pretty good dude. But I pushed my backup quarterback last year. That went viral,” Vikings left guard Dalton Risner, referring to a sideline confrontation during his time with the Denver Broncos. “It was an all-out brawl, how I got made out to be as a guy. Woo, man.

That’s a good example of how you’ve got to be able to ride the wave of this whole deal and keep even-keeled.”

Seattle Seahawks quarterback Drew Lock learned this as a freshman at Missouri, when he eagerly soaked up the praise after a win in his first start and had his eyes opened to the opposite after a lopsided loss the following week.

“I was like, ‘Holy cow, this is a roller coaster of, ‘You’re the best and you’re the worst,’” Lock said. “Once I cleared through that first year I was like, ‘I’m done with it. I’ve got to stay away.’”

Mack and his colleagues with other clubs regularly counsel players through mental health challenges that can quickly arise in this tension between the fame, fortune and privilege of playing a game for a living and the scrutiny surrounding such short careers.

Rookies across the NFL each summer aren’t just trying to memorize their playbooks. They attend a required symposium and receive skills training in areas such as decision-making and stress management.

“We’re trying to put our best foot forward on the field, but people are going to mess

up,” Vikings cornerback Akayleb Evans said. “You’re not always going to be at your best every game. People just have to realize the human side of everything.”

Social media is the proverbial double-edged sword. That’s the easiest way for players to show their human side to the world. But that’s where the danger lurks too.

“I’ve just got to understand that I’m doing something that only a small percentage of people get to do. It’s what comes with this game,” Dallas Cowboys safety Jayron Kearse said. “Before I was here, this came with it. After I’m gone, it’s going to be the same thing that comes with it.”

The people on the other side of the screen are often grappling with the same realities. Matt Rigby manages a high-maintenance fantasy keeper league with friends and relatives, an intense hobby he fits in behind raising a family, working as a data scientist and coaching high school football in North Carolina.

“I’ve had Deebo Samuel on my team for six years. He’s like my brother at this point,” Rigby said. “So when he doesn’t perform well, and I know that I speak for other

people in the league on this too, I think we spend far too much time trying to get into the personal life. There’s like a disappointment in the player simply because of the fantasy outlook.”

Rigby recalled a recent season when another participant was down on San Francisco 49ers tight end George Kittle because his receiving production had waned even though the offense was thriving.

“I’m sitting there thinking, ‘I love watching Kittle right now, because he’s contributing to the game. That doesn’t necessarily mean he’s got a stat line to show for it, but what is football at some point?’” Rigby said. “Is it just fantasy football? Or are we watching the game as the game?”

Tennessee Titans wide receiver Chris Moore has struggled with the push and pull of social media, whether to stay on or get off, as he’s progressed through his career.

“My biggest thing is if I could just tell fans directly, ‘We’re people like you. I have a wife and a daughter, another one on the way. I go home to them,’” Moore said. “I just want to provide for them, see them, and this is just an avenue for me to do that.”

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER



As of Dec. 14, Reds' Hector Efraim is the batting leader, while Marlins pitcher Ben Duenas is still the pitching leader in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Master's League.

Efraim leads the league in batting average with .750, going six hits out of eight at-bats. Second to him is teammate Mike Techur at .667 from six out of nine at-bats. Pirates' Pete Tomokane rounds up the Top 3 with a batting average of .636 from seven hits out of 11 at-bats.

Pirates first baseman Audie Maratita is at the top in two offensive categories—doubles and RBIs. He has nine RBIs, followed by Bruce Norita, Jess Mesa, and Tomokane's seven each; Eric Palacios, Richard Quitugua, and Shine Tenorio have six each; while Ed Manibusan has five.

Maratita, Manibusan, Cris George, J-Boy Deleon Guerrero, Tenorio, and Tony Pangelinan have two doubles each; and 11 other players are tied with one each.

The most runs scored are Alvin Takai, Derek Aguon, James Benavente, and Tomo-



Pirates' Audie Maratita is on top of two offensive categories, RBIs and doubles as of Dec. 14 in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League.

kane with nine each; Cartfield Sablan and Walter Macaranas have eight each; Glen Camacho has seven; and Jerome Delos Santos and Jun Salalila are at six each.

Sablan and Quitugua have the most triples with two each, while Manibusan and Tomokane hit one each.

So far, there are still no home runs in the league.

For pitching, the pitching leader is still 62-year-old Duenas with a 0.00 ERA; 0-0 record seven hits; 0 ER, and three innings in one game played. The Pirates' Dung Tenorio is right there with him with also a 0.00 ERA, three hits, 0 ER, 1-0 record; and three innings in one

game played. The Pirates' Pete Sablan is still in the Top 3 with a 1.56 ERA, nine hits, 2-0 record; two ER, and nine innings pitched in three games played.

The Blue Jays' Kevin Kapileo leads the league with the most strikeouts with 16; Pete Sablan has 13; Alvin Takai collected seven; Clint Quitugua and Tony Flores have six each; Tony Benavente made five; and Bill Camacho and Dominic Hideo three four strikeouts.

500 Sails starts Saipan Polar Bear



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

500 Sails' Saipan Polar Bear challenges CNMI swimmers to swim at least 40 miles during the winter—from Dec. 21 to March 21.



500 Sails invites the public to participate in the Saipan Polar Bear swim event that started yesterday, Dec. 21, 2023.

The Saipan Polar Bear is an annual swimming challenge.

The goal is for CNMI swimmers to swim at least 40 miles during the winter—from Dec. 21 to March 21.

First-time participants under the age of 65 who swim at least 40 miles in that time frame will receive a commemorative marble plaque and polar bear

figurine; those who are 60 and over need only 20 miles.

Special recognition will be given to the first swimmer to reach 40 miles, as well as the participant who swims the most miles by March 21.

Record for most miles is held by Pete Perez at 356 miles. The Saipan version of the Polar Bear is modeled after an event of sister club Dolphin Club San Francisco, where the Polar Bear started to encourage DCSF members to continue swimming during winter months, where temperatures in San Francisco Bay can reach below 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

Emma Perez, 500 Sails co-founder, is a former swim commissioner of DCSF and brought the first Saipan Polar Bear

Swim event to life in 2013.

Swimmers can register for this year's Saipan Polar Bear at the Guma Sakman in Susupe, across from Marianas High School, during morning swims from 6am to 7am Monday to Sunday, or Saturday from 10am to 1pm.

For more information, contact program manager Andrea Carr at (670) 323-7245 (SAIL) or acarr@500sails.org.

You may also reach out via Facebook or Instagram Messenger. Don't know how to swim? Free adult swimming lessons are available every Wednesday from 6am to 7am at the Guma Sakman with prior arrangements. Email info@500sails.org to make arrangements. (PR)

FUTURE

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CNMI, we need our athletes, and we need everybody in this room to grab somebody else to come along for the ride."

After Gross' almost 15-minute speech, he was met with cheers and a standing ovation.

For Gov. Arnold I. Palacios' part, he congratulated the medalists and the team on their accomplishments. "This is the most successful team we've

ever sent to the Pacific Games, so congratulations Team Marianas!"

"To all our gold medalists, and all our medalists, the Commonwealth is very, very proud of you. To all the participants, for all your hard work to represent the Commonwealth, thank you very much. We are very, very proud of you... I know you had some challenges, but I guess that goes with most Games, and we're glad you're all safe back home after repre-



LEIGH GASES

From left, NMSA vice president Ray Tebuteb, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, and NMSA board director Alex Sablan during the appreciation dinner for Team NMI last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.



LEIGH GASES

Team NMI chef de mission Nick Gross delivers a heartfelt speech during the appreciation dinner for the team last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

sending your Commonwealth in this Pacific Games. A lot of our young athletes are most likely to represent again in the next Pacific Games or the next Mini Games. So again, from a very proud community, congratulations and thank you, athletes for representing your Commonwealth very well in the 2023 Pacific Games," he said.

The event was attended by Team NMI athletes and officials

of the 10 sports federations, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, interim Education commissioner Donna Flores, Northern Marianas Sport Association board president Jerry Tan and board members, and representatives of the team's sponsors from Joteten Daidai Foundation, Triple J, Crowne Plaza Resort, IT&E, IP&E, Tan Siu Lin Foundation, Mobil, Tan Holdings, and McDonald's of Guam & Saipan.

GUARDIANS

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at the end of the third, 37-44, as they were finally making their shots from within the perimeter and from downtown.

Jomari Dela Cruz and Jerome Directo provided cover twice each from 3-point range, just as their fast-break plays were also getting results to help the Guardians out of the gutter.

The Guardians fought until the last seconds of the game to rally from behind as Unity Trade slowed down from exhaustion and less than perfect execution to win by a seven-point margin.

Directo put up 15, while Jann Godoy and Dela Cruz assisted with nine each.

Unity Trade's Mateo collected 20 markers, while Quizon had 16 points, and

Vince Rodriguez made 12.

In the standings as of last Tuesday, Dec. 19, Alliana's and Legends are on top with a 6-1 record; Guardians, Bourbon Bar & Cafe, and Maplas are tied with 4-3; Unity Trade is at 2-5; and Eagles Team and Johnny's Bar & Grill are tied with 1-6.

The semis are scheduled for 6pm and 7:30pm on Tuesday, Dec. 26, while the championship is set for

Thursday, Dec. 28 at 4pm

Guardians 63 — Directo 15, Godoy 9, Dela Cruz 9, Diaz 8, Gatbunton 8, Didulo 6, Lumanlan 4, Agbanlog 2, George 2.

Unity Trade 56 — Mateo 20, Quizon 16, Rodriguez 12, Estores 2, Rejano 2, Hernandez 2, Culala 2.

Scoring by quarters: 11-13, 22-26, 37-44, 63-56.

LOPEZ

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be part of our community celebration truly made the evening memorable. Your presence exemplifies the strength and unity that define M2 Fitness," she said.

Bautista also said she is overwhelmed with gratitude and a profound sense of appreciation for each and every one of those who became the backbone of M2 Fitness.

"As we reflect on the past years, I am humbled by the stories of personal growth, resilience, and triumph that have emerged from our members. Your journeys contribute to the collective narrative of success and empowerment that we are building together. These are the members who truly believed and trusted us. My deepest thanks to the incredible individuals who have stood by us, supported us and fueled the engine of our shared mission. Technical Team Ian Yap and Seven Tan. Shodows: Karen Tan, Des Calayo, Ruth Lopez, Catz Medoza, Lucy Pangelinan, Faye La Torre, Irene Dela Paz and Joel Bernardo. Coaches: Mita Pelicano and Julie Harrison," she said.

"To all our sponsors, I wanted to express my sincere gratitude for the generous support of our recent event. Your sponsorship played a vital role in making it a resounding success. We are truly grateful for your commitment to our cause and community. Remember that our organization is not just about fitness; it's about fostering a supportive community that believes in the potential for positive change in every individual. Your involvement, whether as a winner, a participant, or a dedicated volunteer, has played a crucial role in making our mission a reality," she added.

Looking toward the future, Bautista said she hopes all the winners carry out the spirit of encouragement for their peers.

"Together, we will continue to inspire and uplift one another, creating a ripple effect of positive change that extends far beyond the confines of our organization. Congratulations to our winners, and heartfelt thanks to

all participants and M2 members. May the coming year bring even more opportunities for growth, wellness, and community building. Shape it up! Get fit! Don't quit! Say strong! Stay strong!" she said.

The purpose of M2 fitness' year-end party is to celebrate the collective achievements, dedication, and hard work of our members and community throughout the past year.

The festive event aims to foster a sense of camaraderie among our members, volunteers, and supporters, acknowledging their commitment to personal well-being and community building.

"Beyond the physical gains, this gathering serves as a platform to express gratitude, share success stories, and inspire continued motivation for a healthier lifestyle in the upcoming year. By coming together in a spirit of joy and unity, we aim to strengthen the bonds within our fitness community and reinforce our shared commitment to promoting wellness and inclusivity. Through this celebration, we hope to energize and uplift everyone involved, creating a positive momentum that will propel us into a new year filled with renewed determination and a sense of purpose," Bautista added.

The event featured inspirational success stories from individuals who have experienced personal growth and positive transformations through their fitness journeys.

"We were thrilled to have engaging activities and interactive sessions that promoted not only physical well-being but also mental and emotional wellness. From group fitness challenges to wonderful talents, the party provided a holistic approach to health and showcased all the talents of all our members. Our commitment to inclusivity was evident in the diverse range of attendees, showing that wellness knows no boundaries. We celebrated milestones achieved by members of all fitness levels, fostering a sense of community where everyone felt supported and encouraged," she said.

2023. Pacific Games Team NMI Appreciation Dinner



From left, NMSA and Tan Holdings president Jerry Tan, with family including wife Lydia, daughter and two-time Pacific Games gold medalist Tania, and Tahiti tennis player Heimanarii Lai San during the appreciation dinner for Team NMI last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.



Athletics and weightlifting's Greg Borja, seated second left, with athletics' Alexander Camacho, standing left, and Pony Tang, standing second left, and guests during the appreciation dinner for Team NMI last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan



The CNMI National Weightlifting Team including gold medalist Ray Santos, front right, and Northern Marianas Sports Association board member John Davis and Jeanne Rayphand during the appreciation dinner for Team NMI last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.



NMSA board member John Hirsh, far left, solo triathlete Leo Wania, third from left, along with guests during the appreciation dinner for Team NMI last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.



Some members of the CNMI National Va'a Men's Team, including athletics' Lyle Andrew, who is in Guam during the appreciation dinner for Team NMI last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.



Northern Marianas Bodybuilding and Physique Federation and DC Classic president Dee Clayton and husband Brian during the appreciation dinner for Team NMI last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.



Members of the CNMI National Swimming Team during the appreciation dinner for Team NMI last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.



Parents of the CNMI National Swimming Team, along with manager Yuko Kimura, fourth right, and coach Hiroki Kimura, second right during the appreciation dinner for Team NMI last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.



Members of the CNMI National Swimming Team and a guest during the appreciation dinner for Team NMI last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

'The future of NMI sports is very bright'

By **LEIGH GASES**
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REPORTER

"The future of NMI sports is very bright," said Northern Marianas Sports Association president Jerry Tan during the athletes' appreciation dinner last Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

In his remarks before cash incentives were given to the 2023 Pacific Games medalists, Tan said, "We are very, very proud of Team Marianas... people don't realize that athletes don't just show up and go for the games. They have to train. Some of them train everyday. So, it's a lot of commitment and hard work that makes you an NMI athlete."

He said, "The performance was just unbelievable. The NMI actually is considered one of the smallest members with a 45,000 population. You're competing against nations with populations in the millions... so, I just want to point out to all of you—and governor—that not only did we medal and break a Pacific Games record, we brought a very, very young team. There's a lot of young athletes in this group. Thank you, Public School System [interim education] commissioner [Donna Flores], for allowing them to travel."

After the presentation of incentives, Team NMI chef de mission Nick Gross made his remarks choked up, with tears in his eyes.

He first cracked jokes and said he had flashbacks to being back in Honiara as the athletes

in attendance were a sea of blue in Team NMI shirts.



Toward the end of his speech, the PSS Athletics Program director said Team NMI's successes and record-breaking performances does not end there as, "It never ends. It's a perpetuating circle. Do your part. Support kids' programs, come out, make tomorrow and just keep plugging away."

In the near future, there are other competitions for the NMI's athletes to look forward to—the Micro Games next year in the Marshall Islands, the 2025 Pacific Mini Games in Palau, the 2027 Pacific Games in Tahiti, and the other numerous regional and international competitions on the individual level.

Gross also broke down the 2023 Pacific Games theme of "Challenge, Celebrate, and Unite."

With "challenge," he said, "Along with all the great, fantastic things, there were a few barriers, a few things that came up. Transportation seems to be a recurring theme, incessant heat... tough conditions... we had some things that got in our way for success, but in the end, we absolutely rallied."

For the word "celebrate,"

Northern Marianas Sports Association members and the team's sponsors pose with the bronze and silver medalists of the 2023 Pacific Games after they were handed their incentives last Tuesday night in an appreciation dinner at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.



Northern Marianas Sports Association president Jerry Tan praises the team and its young athletes on their accomplishments at the big stage of the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Gross said, "I'm so proud of the performances put forth by the team and the support that we showed for one another throughout the two weeks... It's hard to focus—it's hard to dig down and do what you know you have to do but we did it. We played incredibly at all levels. So, the celebration really belongs to everybody in this room. Our sponsors, thank you so very much for making it possible. But it is extended to the entire Northern Marianas, those

that are here today, those that are everywhere around the world. I hope that it is a proud, proud accomplishment."

As for "unity," Gross said, "These Pacific Games allow the vast region of Oceania to come together and truly unite through our love of sport and the sharing of our cultures on a four-year basis. Don't think four years is so far out there. It will be here in the blink of an eye... We need the sponsors, and we need the

See **FUTURE** on Page 37

Guardians, Legends draw 1st blood in playoffs

By **LEIGH GASES**
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REPORTER



The Guardians and Legends drew first blood in the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational Basketball League playoffs that started last Wednesday at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

The Guardians skirted past Unity Trade, 63-56, while the Legends whooped Eagles Team, 66-52.

Unity Trade had it all together defensively and offensively in the first three quarters of the



Guardian's Jerome Directo led the team with 15 points in their Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational Basketball League playoff win against Unity Trade last Wednesday night at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

game thanks to speedster and sharpshooter Dan Mateo. They had the Guardians locked down

with close leads, but it wasn't enough to keep them at bay in the end.

There were a lot of back-and-forth exchanges that led to Unity Trade's short lead as the Guardians didn't give up and attacked the basket as much as they could.

In the first and second quarter, Unity Trade would have 4-point leads, only to be tied up by the Guardians from free throws or layups. However, Unity Trade's Mateo's 3-pointers and clutch drives assisted by Paul Quizon allowed them another 4-point lead at the end of the first half, 26-22.

The Guardians came back stronger in the last quarter after being down seven points

See **GUARDIANS** on Page 37

Lopez tops M2's 60-day Body Transformation competition

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER



Bernard Lopez prevailed in this year's 60-day Body Transformation competition hosted annually by M2 Fitness.

Over the weekend, M2 held its annual Christmas celebration where they announced the winners of their 60-day Body Transformation contest. This year, Lopez triumphed over three other contestants.

Coming in second was Salve Bahillo, followed by Rosanna Lopez while Connie Quidato was awarded fourth place.

Aside from the transformation competition, M2 also awarded Rochelle Juangco the Star of the Night award.

M2 also had a group performance competition for the evening and the grand prize

winner was M2 Ocean Fires.

M2 Kikay Sirens came at a close second followed by M2 Ocean Pearls who completed the top three.

M2 Fitness president Mary Grace Bautista said she is filled with immense pride and gratitude for the outstanding achievements and collective efforts that were showcased at M2's year-end event.

"To all our winners, congratulations! Your dedication, hard work, and perseverance have not only earned you well-deserved recognition but have also inspired everyone around you. Your accomplishments serve as a testament to the power of commitment and the positive impact that can be achieved through a shared vision for health and wellness plus talents. To every participant who contributed to the vibrant energy of the event, thank you. Your enthusiasm, support, and willingness to

See **LOPEZ** on Page 37



Bernard Lopez, the winner of this year's 60-day Body Transformation contest hosted by M2 Fitness, poses in front of his stats during M2 Fitness' year-end event last Saturday at the Saipan World Resort.